

# Faith & Fellowship

Vol. 85, No. 2

March/April 2018  
Lamb of God



**KING**  
me

CLB Biennial Convention 2018  
**June 9-12**  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota  
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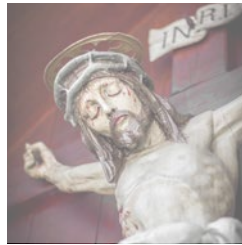
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**FAITH & FELLOWSHIP**  
*Volume 85 - Number 2*

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Email prayer requests to: [pray@clba.org](mailto:pray@clba.org)

**Do You Understand?**

H.E. WISLØFF

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**Over the head of Jesus** was hung a tablet which announced the accusations against him. It read, “King of the Jews.” But, strangely, the accusation did not declare him guilty, but rather, innocent. It is over our heads that there hangs a tablet declaring our guilt.

Have you seen the writing that God has written? It differs from that which man has written—“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” It was our sin which brought Jesus to the cross.

The cross becomes a refuge for sinners!

The tablet which Pilate placed on the cross was written in Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. Pilate did not understand that

the gospel was to be written in all languages. Is it not rather striking that on this very cross there should be written a word in several languages?

Today that message has been multiplied hundreds of times. Is it written in a language you understand? Here the Savior of the world is dying for you, in order that you might live for him.

*Hans Edvard Wisløff (1902—1969) was a Norwegian theologian and writer. He was also the Bishop of the Diocese of Sør-Hålogaland from 1959 until his death in 1969.*

*Wisløff, H.E., Quiet Moments on the Way Home. Fergus Falls, MN: Faith & Fellowship Press, 1993.*

# The Servant and Her Master

TROY TYSDAL

I buckled my son into his seat and set him up with a video game that I hoped would hold his attention for most of the flight. With the boy thoroughly distracted I pulled the Bible from my carry-on bag and thought to myself, “If the video game does its job, I’ll have three hours of uninterrupted reading.”

I could not have been more wrong.

As I opened the Bible, my silence was immediately disrupted by the man sitting next to me. “That’s a great book,” he commented. “Yes it is,” I agreed. “It could be even better,” he replied, “if they just took all the holy books and combined them into one.” “Why do you say that?” I asked. “Because the message is all the same,” he said with a clever smile, “be good!” “With all due respect,” I replied, “this is the one book that says you will never be good enough.”

## MARK 10:45

Jesus said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

At the core of most religions you will find commandments and guidelines. It is true that you will find those in Christianity as well, but not at the core. You see, Christianity demands obedience to the Law of God. It tells us that anything less than perfection brings death—and with death comes Hell. In fact, the demands placed on humankind by the Holy Bible are far greater, and the consequences much more severe, than that of most other religions. But Christianity does not stop there. The Christian faith tells us of a God who left heaven—a God who came as a ransom, a sacrifice, once and for all for the sins of the world. At the core of Christianity you will not find commandments and guidelines. You will find a Savior—Jesus Christ.

I spent the next three hours of my flight listening to the man’s life story. Not only his life story, but the story of



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his parents, and after that, the story of his grandparents—and that’s where it got interesting. The man told me of his grandfather, who as a young man came from Sweden to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the late 1800s. This young man found work at a lumber mill, and fell in love with a young indentured servant working across town as a housemaid. The young man worked hard and saved his money until he thought he had enough to provide for the young woman. He asked for her hand in marriage, and she joyfully agreed. When she returned to her master with news of the engagement, the master informed her that she had accumulated a large debt for room and board, and that she could not get married until her debt was paid in full. The young woman was trapped.

When the young man returned to the lumber mill, he told his employer of his fiancée’s situation. The following day, the mill owner provided the young man with enough money to pay the young woman’s debt. But when he attempted, the young woman’s master refused to let her go. He accused the young man of being a thief and told him, “Your money is no good with me.” Devastated, the young man returned to the lumber mill to share the news with his employer. Without hesitation the mill owner called for his sleigh to be readied. He traveled

across town, through the harsh Michigan winter, and paid the young woman’s debt in full. As a man of power and authority, his payment could not be denied. He set the young woman free... and never asked the couple for a penny in return.

As the man on the plane finished telling me the story of his grandparents, I told him, “That’s the difference!” He looked at me confused—not realizing that after three hours our conversation had come full-circle. He listened as I explained the gospel to him: “As the mill owner left the comfort of his mill to pay a debt the young couple could not afford, Jesus left the comfort of heaven to pay a debt we cannot afford. As the mill owner had the power and authority to set the young woman free, so Jesus has the power and authority to set us free. But the mill owner only paid in cash; Jesus paid in blood.” As I spoke, the man fell silent, thinking hard about what I said.

Are you trying to pay a debt you can’t afford? Are you trying to be good? Good! But good will never be good enough. Trust in the One who left heaven and traveled to the cross. Trust in him, and your debt has been paid in full.

*Rev. Troy Tysdal is Director of Communications and Prayer for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren and serves as editor in chief of Faith & Fellowship magazine.*



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# Daddy, Why a Lamb?

DAVID VEUM



[www.LBS.edu](http://www.LBS.edu)

**W**hen I was ten years old, our Sunday School leader told us a story about a lamb. Harold had just learned of his mother's death and he wanted to tell us of a very important experience he had with her.

He began, "How many of you have a puppy or a kitty?" We raised our hands. "When I was a small boy in Africa where my parents were missionaries, I had a pet lamb. I would run on the paths in the bush and play with my lamb just like you play with your pets. One day, my lamb stumbled and could not get up. I scooped it in my arms and ran home. As I placed my lamb in my mother's lap, it died.

"My mother found that it had been bitten by a poisonous snake. She put the lamb down on the dirt floor of our home, picked me up, and explained, 'Harold, I believe that Satan meant that snake bite

for you. But God arranged it so that your lamb was bitten instead.' Then she told me about God's Lamb."

But why a Lamb? Why does God have a Lamb? Here is Scripture's answer in three short stories.

1. Isaac was off his mat and out of the tent before sunrise. His father was saddling up the camels and they were heading for Mount Moriah. The boy pictured crossing the desert sands with the Judean mountains on their east.

"Oh, daddy. Thank you for taking me along!" "Isaac," his father said gravely, "I could not go without you."

For three days young Isaac sat tall in the saddle of his camel. Each night by the campfire he begged his father to tell him stories of the ancient city of Ur, of the war against the kings, and of the three

angels that came to announce his birth. But these nights his father was pensive and quiet and Isaac contented himself with counting stars and finding Orion and Pisces.

Finally, majestic Mount Moriah loomed before them. In the Kidron Valley they dismounted and tethered their camels. "Let me carry the wood! I'm big enough now." His father took his long knife from his saddle bag and placed it in the sheath on his belt. In his left hand he carried a torch lit from their morning campfire. Ascending the mountain, a strange thought came over Isaac. "Dad, we have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" All Abraham would say was, "God will provide himself a lamb."

Slowly they climbed around the rocks. Once on top Isaac dropped the wood.

***“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.”***

***Isaiah 53:7***

“Whew! That was heavy.” “Let’s build an altar,” Abraham whispered hoarsely.

“Is this rock OK?” “Let me help you put the wood on the altar, daddy.” “What are you doing? Why are you tying me up? Why are you putting me on the altar? Why are you reaching for your knife? Daddy? No! No!”

“Stop!” cried out a voice.

The next moments happened so fast Isaac hardly could take it all in. His father sliced off the ropes. Isaac was on the ground again. They both saw it at once, a ram-lamb caught in the brush. His father’s powerful strength returned. The animal caught, killed, and burning on the altar. Isaac kneeling alongside in wonder as his father sang praise upon praise to God.

As Isaac skipped down the mountain hours later, old Abraham scooped his son into his arms and let out a giant laugh. A long, happy silence ensued. Finally, Isaac asked, “Daddy, why a lamb?” “Because, Isaac, *only a lamb could take your place.*”

2. Sarah and her family were making their trek to Jerusalem for Yom Kippur, the Great Day of Atonement. “Imagine,” she thought, “Jerusalem with all those shops and young men from all over Israel.”

But her visit to Jerusalem was not at all what she expected. Instead of shopping, they stood in long services at the temple singing the ancient songs of David. Instead of sampling real food from the many vendors, they ate very little. On

the eve of Yom Kippur, they fasted the entire day. And the young men from all over Israel? They seemed to be more interested in long prayers than in Sarah’s long hair.

She stood reluctant and bored on the Great Day, standing among thousands, until her disinterest was disrupted by the sound of a tiny animal cry. That bewildered bleat and the deafening silence following arrested her attention. Looking up she saw the high priest enter the temple, dressed in a white tunic now mostly red. Long minutes later he took a second goat, placed his hands on the young goat’s head, and began to pray.

“What’s he doing, father?” “He’s praying.” “I know, but what is he praying?” “He’s praying our sins onto the young goat.” “Sins? What sins?” “Oh, all the ways we miss God’s ideal—when we are more concerned about how we look to ourselves in the mirror than how we look to God. Even my own attitude toward my brother is included in his prayer.”

What happened next took her completely by surprise. The high priest took his hands off the young goat; a man approached and led the tiny animal away. “Where’s he taking it, father?” “He is leading it out into the wilderness. The animal is carrying our sins away from the presence of God.” “What will happen to it?” “Oh, Sarah. That is the terrible part about sin. The man will push the goat over a cliff and it will be left there to die.” “But why, why such a young, innocent

lamb?” “Because, Sarah, *only a lamb can carry away our sin.*”

3. Jesus is in an olive garden. It is almost midnight. Listen closely and you will hear low groans and loud cries, “Daddy, is there some other way?”

Soldiers arrest him and mock him. The high priest declares that Jesus ought to die. The governor capitulates. Instead of a knife they use nails. Instead of a cliff they use a cross. Near the very spot where Isaac had once laid down the wood, Jesus lays himself down on the wood of the cross.

No voice shouts, “Stop!” From the darkness he cries out, “Daddy, why me? Daddy, why a lamb?” And the Father whispers in heaven, “Because *only My lamb can save the whole world from sin.*”



*Rev. David Veum, D.Min., serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as president of Lutheran Brethren Seminary.*

# King of the Jews

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BEN BIGAOUETTE

If you were asked to name your favorite novel, song, movie, or TV show, you would probably respond with the title of each one. My own answers, for example, would be: *Unbroken*, “Gesù Bambino,” *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and *ESPN Films’ 30 for 30*. I doubt many of us would say, “That book written by Mark Twain” or “That movie with Meryl Streep.” Why not? Because the title is essential to the identity of what you are talking about. Ask any good author, poet, director, or artist; the power is in the title. The title draws us in, gives clarity to what we are witnessing, and gives meaning and significance to what we are experiencing.

Looking at the life of Jesus Christ, we see that he was a man of many titles: Prince of Peace, Light of the World, Good Shepherd, and Bread of Life, just to name a few. But there is one particular title that stands out during this Easter season. It was put on display at his crucifixion: King of the Jews.

We read in John 19 that Pontius Pilate ordered that a sign proclaiming this title be placed above Jesus’ head on his cross. It was normal practice to communicate a particular criminal’s crime for all to see, but there was something about this sign that was different. The Apostle John paints the scene this way (19:19-22):

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in

Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

What led Pilate to write these words, not of a crime, but asserting a title? Pilate had been convinced that Jesus was innocent of any crime and had tried numerous times to have him set free. In the end, Pilate succumbed to both his own weaknesses and the riotous crowd that had been seething outside his chambers. The Jewish authorities and the crowd had heavily influenced his leadership and decision-making as governor and judge regarding Jesus. This sign on the cross would have surely incited rage in the Jewish high priests. Consider it Pilate’s final attempt to show them up. Worse yet, for them, was that this sign was written in several languages so that everyone could read it as they passed by. All could see the title of the man on the cross; all could be met with the significance of those words: King of the Jews.

Pilate had a first-hand experience with Jesus as he interrogated him in an effort to find out why this crowd was so angry with him—angry enough to want him killed. Jesus was brought to Pilate as a political criminal, as one who claimed to be a king and opposed the rule of Rome. Such a charge was nothing new to Pilate, but Jesus was not that kind of king—as Jesus himself told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world... my kingdom is from

another place” (John 18:36). Pilate knew that the Jews despised Roman rule and authority. He also knew that their coming Messiah would be a king. So, what was the issue? The Jewish authorities said that this man claimed to be King of the Jews. Why did they not want him as their king?

In this moment the truth was revealed to Pilate by the chief priests, the representatives of their faith and their people, as they responded: “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15b). Those were their words. The people did not want Jesus as their king and they definitely didn’t want a sign proclaiming that to the world. This response given to Pilate by the chief priests on two occasions went against their own integrity, their own beliefs, and ultimately their own God. This defiant, rebellious, treasonous statement eerily defames the words of the prayer that the Jewish people would have prayed during the Passover, which they were in the midst of celebrating: “From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God; beside Thee we have no king, redeemer, or savior; no liberator, deliverer, provider; none who takes pity in every time of distress or trouble. We have no king but Thee.”<sup>1</sup>

Many in the crowd that day were met with the unspoken question, “Who is your king?” Many passersby at the foot of the cross were met with the title, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” We today are also met with this question and conviction. As you approach the cross this Easter season, who holds the title of king in your life? What other things, titles, or

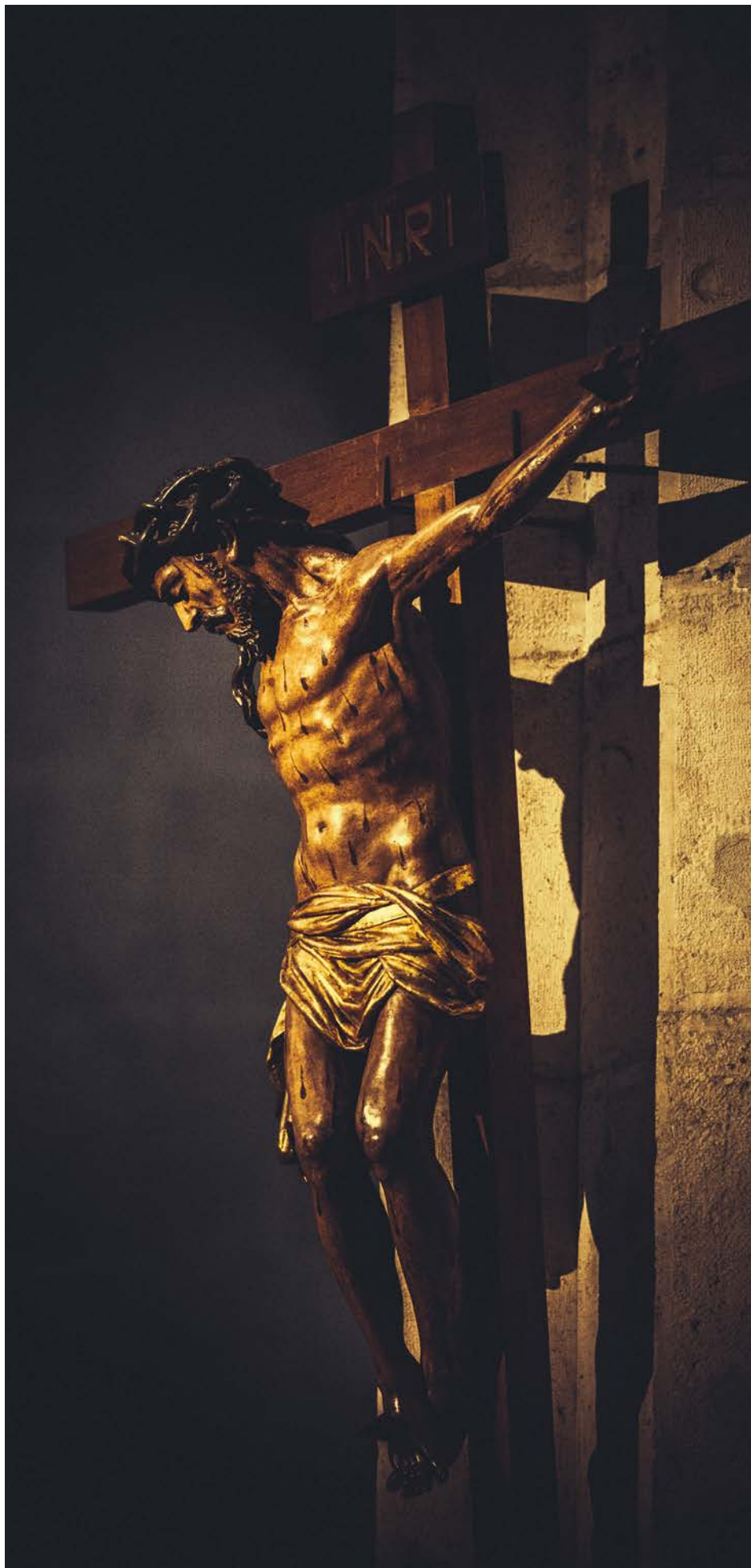
people are pitted against King Jesus as you operate day-to-day? Many kings compete for our attention: money, fame, self-image, job, reputation, possessions, etc. But we are met with the same King. This is the One who died in our place, who took on our sin and our punishment so that we could live and be free. Jesus longs to free us from the oppressive sin, shame, and guilt that threaten to enslave us. In addition, he offers us true life. What does it mean for Jesus to be your King? He is not just the King of the Jews, he is also the King of you and me.



*Ben Bigaouette serves Oak Hill Church in Bloomington, Minnesota as Associate Pastor.*

## Source

1. Kruse, Colin F. 2017. John: Revised Edition. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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# Jesus: A Friend to Thieves

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RICK FREESE

**T**here are moments in Christian ministry when we are the recipients of our Lord's special ministry to us. I preface my own such encounter with the Lord by referencing Matthew 25:39, "Lord, when did I see you in prison?"

God's call to ministry came to me in an unusual way. A co-worker had pled guilty to being a pedophile and was waiting to begin his sentence. Our employer requested that he continue working in my area, maintaining the computer reliability of recently installed units. I agreed, along with most of my staff... with some hesitancy on my part. I had served in law enforcement earlier in my life and would have arrested him for what he did.

However, something thought-provoking happened that I did not expect. I had become a "friend of a leper" and faced some avoidance by others in the

workplace. We learned that the man's wife had not known about his deviant behavior. My wife, Linda, and I offered to accompany his wife as she visited him in county, and later state, facilities. In the process, I recognized God was making a specific call to me to serve in prison chaplaincy. I was fortunate and blessed to have a very helpful and understanding wife. I was also able to enroll in a Dutch Reformed Seminary close to home that had an evening M.Div. program, along with accomplishing my Lutheran studies under Pastor Chuck Ewan at Bunker Hill Lutheran Brethren Church.

My clinical pastoral field experience was at the Garden State Youth Correctional Facility in Yardville, New Jersey. As part of my responsibilities I worked in the Administrative Segregation Unit known as the "jail within the jail." It is a highly restrictive housing unit for a

definite period of time for inappropriate behavior.

Access to this isolated location required a custody officer to escort me through several locked doors and up a stairwell. One of the custody officers in "Ad/Seg" would verify my access authorization and then escort me to sign in after frisking me again for any contraband. This area is a 24/7 lockdown except for individual use of a small exercise enclosure surrounded by walls topped with ribbon wire. I arrived at my destination. There was an unbelievable ear-piercing sound that greeted me from both sides of the cell block and I tried not to react to the vocabulary that was being used.

Part of my visitation plan was to provide Bibles, "Our Daily Bread" devotional and a bulletin handout that included a cartoon message from the "Gospel According to Peanuts," along



jmbatni/Stock





with Bible Crossword and Word Puzzles. The bulletin was appreciated and the inmates quickly realized that they would need a Bible to complete both the Bible Crossword and Word Puzzles. I would also listen to the individual young men as I went from cell to cell. Sometimes they would ask me to pray for them and their family members, but sometimes they would utter vulgarities or just tell me to leave them alone.

On one particular winter night I was a little tired after my regular workday in Trenton, and the drive to Yardville, N.J. seemed longer than usual. The inmate count in the “Ad/Seg” unit was about twenty out of a possible twenty-four occupancy. I was just finishing my last cell visitation with a Hispanic man about nineteen years old. I prayed with him and desperately attempted to remember all the members of his family to pray for, and

their circumstances. I was just completing the prayer... when he grabbed my arm!

At first I thought he had some intent of assaulting me. (That does occur from time to time, including spitting or worse.) Instead he said to me, “Chaplain, you look like you had a rough day. Let me pray for you!” God transformed my day through this young man’s prayer. In spite of the noisy and ill-mannered environment of the cell block, I was a recipient of our Lord’s ministry to me through this young inmate. I became completely refreshed in this thought: “Lord, I have seen you in prison!”

My understanding of the ministry of prison chaplaincy took on an entirely different perspective that night. Any notion of my ministry became eclipsed by the presence of the ongoing ministry of Jesus at work, wherever our Lord sends us to serve him by serving others.

So often we like to think that we are in control. In our various ministries there comes a moment for each of us when God reminds us that he is always in control.

At my graduation from seminary the president of the school quipped to me, “Rick, I understand you are going on from reform school to prison.” My short response was, “It’s God call! Amen.”



*Rev. Fredric Freese serves as pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church of Palatka, Florida.*

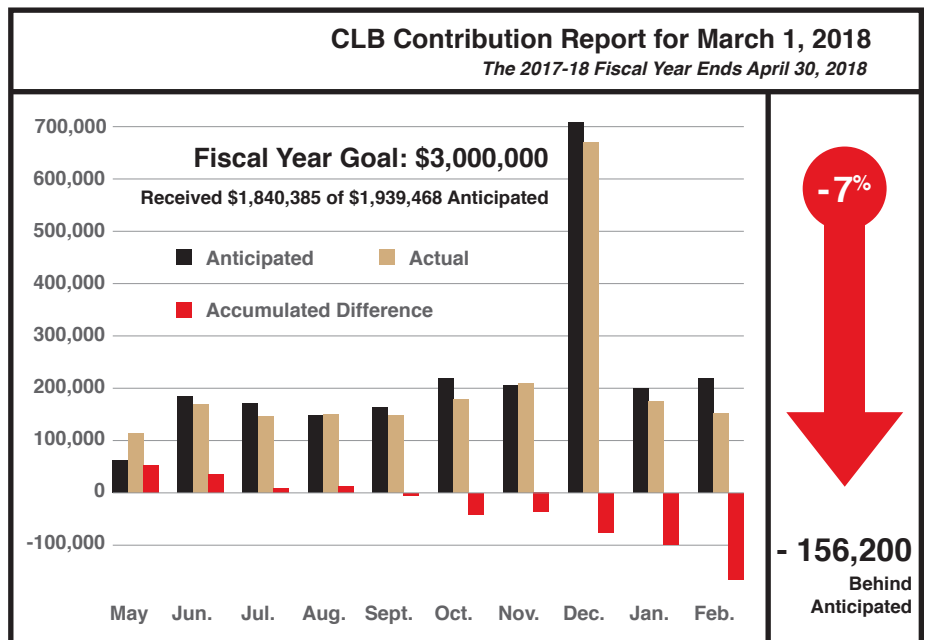
# Pivot Point

ROY HEGGLAND

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV).

The death and resurrection of Jesus is not a story told to teach us something. It is not a fable or wishful thinking. It is not about a good person who was unfairly murdered by the leaders of that day for telling truth that condemned them. It is not a story about someone who is an example we should follow in order to please God. It is not the story of a prophet who lived a good life and pointed us to the truth. It is not about a heavenly being who came to show us that we too could rise above the evil and pain of this life to attain salvation. It is not even a story about God coming in the form of a man to live a perfect life and die for us in order to compensate for our shortcomings.

No, the death and resurrection of Jesus is so much more that all of these misconceptions. In fact, it is something far greater than anything that has ever happened or ever will happen in time or eternity. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the *pivotal moment* upon which everything else in all of history hinges. This event overshadows history itself. This event is so singular and explosive that all eternity is intimately involved in it. Nothing in the universe is untouched by it and nothing makes sense without it. It is truly the answer to every question about existence and meaning. It weaves purpose into life and death, suffering and happiness, pain and joy. It is the event that reversed all things for time and eternity. It brings joy from suffering, life from death. It brings new life to a broken,



dead, hopeless race of beings facing only eternal suffering apart from the only One who is Good and Perfect.

That is why our pastors spend so much time and effort focusing on the cross. There is nothing else to preach and teach about unless the cross and resurrection are the foundation. In each article that I write for *Faith & Fellowship*, where I encourage us to give in a generous and sacrificial way, the cross and resurrection are always in my thinking (and I hope in the words I use to express myself). The message of stewardship makes absolutely no sense at all unless it is preceded in our personal experience by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So I ask you once again to consider the opportunity before us all to provide the means by which Christ’s death and resurrection are made known to those who are still a part of that hopeless race

from which we have been raised to life. May we this Easter season be reckless in our giving! May we see the insignificance of even our own financial security apart from this *pivot point* in history. Let us give as if lives depend upon it...*because they do!*

*Roy Heggland is Associate for Biblical Stewardship for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*



# KING me BC18

BC18  
BIENNIAL CONVENTION  
JUNE 9~12  
FERGUS FALLS, MN

*KING me:* God's Kingdom is not a static institution. It is active, present, and yet arriving. It is a noun with verb-like movement and inertia. It comes to us, through us, and one day will return for us.

We say, *KING me*, not in self-promoting glory, but as believers whose lives have been transformed by the invading reign of Jesus Christ. Alone we are vastly limited, random, and weak pawns, but in Christ Jesus we simply, profoundly are HIS—His children, joined to His mission, indwelled by His Spirit—advancing His kingdom to create disciples for the glory of God.

Join us June 9-12 for the 2018 Biennial Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, as we explore the Kingdom parables found in Matthew 13 and Christ's charge to the Church to be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Register at:

[www.CLBA.org/BC18](http://www.CLBA.org/BC18)

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★ — DELAGOON PARK — ★

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June 10<sup>th</sup>

OLD TYME BASEBALL  
KUBB ★ MEAL ★ MUSIC  
KIDS GAMES' ★ WORSHIP



Location: Bethel Lutheran Church • 702 West Alcott Avenue • Fergus Falls, MN 56537

Information: Church of the Lutheran Brethren • Phone: 218-739-3336 • E-mail: [clb@CLBA.org](mailto:clb@CLBA.org)



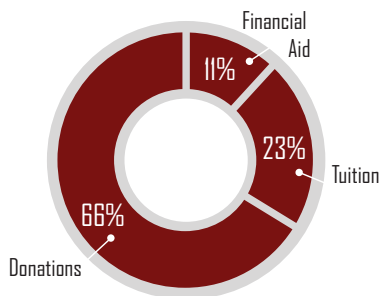
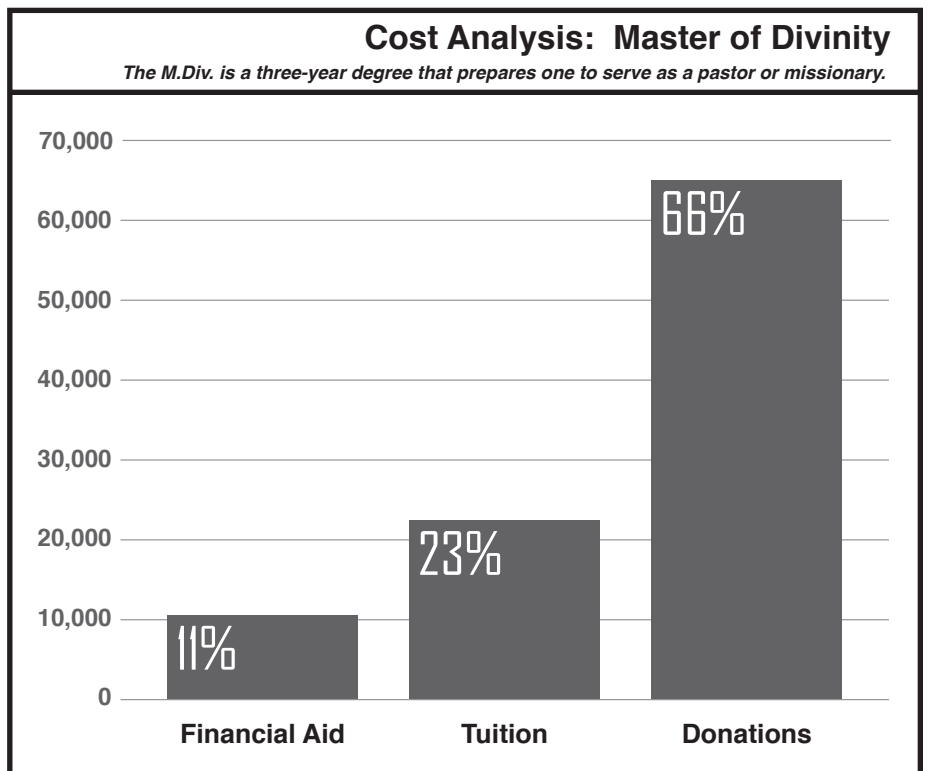
# Investing in the Foundation

DAVID VEUM

I am so grateful to my home congregation for sending me to seminary. Harold Revne, an elder in Bethesda, told me, “David, it’s time for you to go to get better prepared for ministry. And we’ll pay the tuition.” That’s just what they did. They set up a scholarship fund and paid it all.

At Lutheran Brethren Seminary I received a foundation that I could never get any other way. I still have my notes from Pastor Gjerness’ class on the book of Romans. Pastor Boe had a grading scale on the syllabus for preaching class which included the line, “No Gospel = F.” In Old Testament class we learned to hear all of its contents in light of God’s promise of the Savior through whom “all the nations of the earth would be blessed.” What a foundation!

What I didn’t know then was the cost of this foundation. I only wondered, “How could I pay tuition *and* living expenses while in seminary?” My work now includes helping many students to find answers to the same question. But I also know that tuition alone doesn’t pay the cost of the foundation.



How much does it cost? Tuition for a three-year Master of Divinity costs \$33,000. Financial aid from endowments pays 1/3 of that cost for those preparing for CLB ministry. Beyond that, the financial partners of LBS give \$2 for every \$1 paid in tuition.

Who are these partners?

- Business people who believe in the value of a solid foundation.
- Retirees who give from their investments and their social security checks.
- Pastors who experience every day the importance of this foundation.

I’m so grateful for congregations who send people into ministry and pay the cost. They invest in providing a solid foundation. They proactively prepare the next generation of pastors and leaders. They “pray the Lord of the harvest to send workers into the harvest.” They encourage teenagers to test their ministry skills, and they affirm them in their ministry gifts. They set up scholarship funds so that they can send students to prepare for ministry.

Now that I better understand the investment required, I am also grateful

for those who provide the cost of what tuition does not pay. I wish that I could tell you all of their stories, but I don’t even know them all. I do know that they are godly people who are willing to invest in the cost of the foundation.

You are invited to partner with them to provide this solid foundation in the Word, one that will stand firm in any storm.

*Dr. David Veum is President of Lutheran Brethren Seminary in Fergus Falls, MN.*



Visit LBS online at: [www.LBS.edu](http://www.LBS.edu)



## Keep Your Eyes Open

CHERYL OLSEN

As I visited recently with Mary Rodgers and Mary Helwagen from Mentor, Ohio, they shared the passion of Pilgrim Lutheran Brethren Church (PLBC) for making disciples and encouraging women through Women's Ministry to their Northeastern Ohio area.

Here's what they had to say: We've found that although the women of PLBC are involved in many aspects of church life, there remains a hunger for deeper personal fellowship with Jesus and with other women. Bible Study groups help answer this need. On Thursday mornings, a Bible study that began thirty years ago with stay-at-home moms has continued as a great prayer support group throughout the years, though many are now much older. A Thursday evening group of mixed ages focuses primarily on Beth Moore studies. Ten years ago, two working ladies too tired for Thursday nights saw a need for a Saturday morning in-depth study (with homework). In addition, during the summer months when the other groups take a break, one of our returned "Snow Birds" teaches a weekly evening study for her neighbors, friends, and church members.

Utilizing different formats—lighter or more intense, come-as-you-are or homework-based studies—each group is growing closer to the Lord and to each other, gaining confidence in leading others and sharing their faith as they spend time learning and praying together. As we have become more tech savvy, some women who are traveling have even joined in via the internet.

Many also put feet to their faith serving the greater community individually or collectively through delivering meals, serving a homeless shelter, prison ministries, Alzheimer's support, card ministries, and more. For additional fellowship, the groups might add an occasional potluck meal or a field trip.

Five years ago when a community Moms In Touch group disbanded, several women saw a need, so they started a monthly "A Mother's Heart" group. They provide childcare, "Titus Two" women to facilitate table discussions, a gospel devotion, and a light supper.

Events great and small throughout the year provide a comfortable time to invite friends and neighbors:

- Late January multi-generational "Blahs Party" to combat post-holiday and NE Ohio seriously gray day "blahs" with a white elephant gift exchange.
- Spring mother-daughter-friends catered dinner with music and a devotional.
- Fall Saturday retreat with in-depth teaching, activities, a catered light meal, and often a missions project or make-and-take craft.
- Christmas Tea featuring great desserts and finger food (not being purists, coffee is allowed).
- Monthly book club from September to May, meeting over dinner at Panera.
- Serendipity Ladies' Groups of four to five multi-generational women randomly matched, gathering over a meal or project in order to know each other better.

What's the take-away? "There's no formula for successful women's ministry. Just look and see the need. Where is the gap? If you have a heart for something, plan it, pray over it, and try it. Encourage multi-generational involvement. Take ownership, but be flexible. Train others. Let God mold you and the ministry, and Keep Your Eyes Open!"

*Cheryl Olsen is the Faith & Fellowship correspondent for WMCLB.*



Pilgrim LBC: Blahs Party, 2017.



Pilgrim LBC: Thursday Morning Bible Study.



Pilgrim LBC: Thursday Evening Bible Study.



Pilgrim LBC: Saturday Morning Bible Study.





Pastor Jeff Seaver of Triumph LBC, visiting with LBIM missionaries Danny B. and Dave N., during a recent LBIM – Chad missionary retreat.

# God's Grace Flows

DAVID N.

**W**e are in Chad! It has been almost four years to the day since we first heard about the need for people to come and share God's Word among the unreached people in Chad. God has certainly taught us a lot since then—especially during our year in France.

At the end of the year, I was asked to speak at the language school closing ceremony (in French, of course) about what we had learned in our time there. They asked me on a Monday to speak at the ceremony on Friday, and we were flying to Chad Sunday. This meant I would have to prepare the speech during final exams, while packing for our new life in Africa. I said yes, because I can

rarely say no. In the end I was glad, because it forced me to stop and reflect on what we had learned in our time there.

I was able to make a pretty decent “top ten” list of things we learned in France. Some were humorous. For example, France is the culinary capital of the world, but the two McDonald's restaurants in our town were *always packed*, even more so than in the States.

Also, in learning a language, pronunciation is very important. To me, the French words for “hunter” and “shoe” are somewhat similar in sound, so I had to make sure these distinctions in sound were very clear and proper. I learned this the hard way. When I asked someone if their cat was a good “hunter,” instead

the word “shoe” came out. It creates embarrassing, but mostly laughable moments.

French people tend to think America exists in three parts: California, New York, and—the center of all American culture—Texas. I explained that I came from Minnesota, but the closest understanding anyone came to was that I lived where all the mountains were—but that's Montana.

Reflecting on the most important lessons of the year, what struck me most was how much God uses our weaknesses. I could blend into the crowd in France, but the minute I opened my mouth I stuck out like a sore thumb. I do not like being weak, but God showed me again



Sonja N., offering up a sacrifice of praise.



Ivan N. playing on a swing set in Chad.



Sonja and Ivan N. visiting with Carrie and Talitha S. during the LBIM – Chad Missionary retreat.

and again that he could use my “weak” French to create conversations about him. Quite often, when a French person heard me speak, they wanted to know why I was there. This led to the subject of being a missionary learning French in order to speak about Jesus in Chad, Africa.

I got lots of different reactions. One lady initially thought I must be in the gas or oil business if I wanted to go to Chad. When I explained to her that I was a missionary who was going to speak about God she gave me a look like I was crazy for bringing my family there. There were others who wondered if there were other people like me staying in France. I probably talked to more complete strangers about my faith in that one year than I had in all my life, all because of what I considered a weakness. It caused me to really ponder the words, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We are super excited as we look forward to moving to a village among the

unreached in Chad. We have been praying and preparing for four years now, and it’s as close to a reality as we could hope! As we start learning about life in Chad, it’s good to know we have a God who works through our weaknesses, even if at times that still seems impossible. Weaknesses in Chad seem to be amplified to an extent that is hardly bearable. I don’t even need to speak to be unmasked as a foreigner.

God has brought us all the way to Chad. We could be tempted to think of it as reaching the finish line after four years—“we’ve made it!” Instead, it feels about as daunting, undoable, and far away a task as ever.

When I start to get overwhelmed, thinking that things aren’t going the way they should, I realize that I am trying to force things “the way they should be,” instead of waiting and letting God work as he wills. It’s very easy to see my weaknesses as paths to failure, instead of ways that God can glorify himself. This hits at the center of my selfish nature, of wanting to be the giver of all good things.

How can it possibly be good, if I can’t be the one bringing joy to the world through my success?

But even in my mistakes I know God’s grace flows toward me continuously, and that is *the* amazing gospel of grace that we get to preach! That power of Christ that was made perfect in his weakness on the cross—it is the same power that continues to work in our weakness on earth! I don’t need to worry about doing amazing things or being the fastest language learner on the planet. In whatever broken form I can speak the words of Christ to people, the power of God will shine through.

*David N. serves with his wife Sonja on behalf of Lutheran Brethren International Mission to the unreached people of Chad.*

**WHO'S  
NEXT?**

*Is God calling you to mission work?  
Contact: LBIM@CLBA.org*



TonyBaggett/iStock

# Jesus is the Foundation



JOAKIM GUNDERSEN

*In 1902 Joakim Gundersen received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. From that day forward, he made it his life's mission to tell others of his Savior. On October 30, 1959, Joakim wrote the letter below to encourage his grandson and to share his testimony.*

**D**ear Willmore, I have long thought of sending you this letter. I hope you can understand my handwriting. I could write about the seasons, the weather, people or cattle. But there is something more important than that. I want to ask about where you are spiritually!

You are young and I am old, but we still have much in common. Please listen and don't reject what I am saying, as I

believe it can be of good help for you all through life. Life can be divided into two segments. You can live according to the flesh, your old nature. Or you can live according to the Spirit, the new nature we receive from Jesus.

My father and mother were Christians. They taught me about Jesus in my childhood. I was taught to pray. I went to Sunday school. In grade school we had Christianity as one of our subjects. And I learned many things in Confirmation.

But I did not remain in that childlike faith. After Confirmation I wanted to live the way I felt like living. My mother's and father's warnings went by the wayside. I lived according to my own desires until I was 20½ years of age. God was calling me during those years, but I

did not want to listen. I just wanted to live my own life and have fun. I followed the way of the world. Contentment and peace never lasted very long. Finally, a great conversion took place in my life.

Here is the story: I went out to sea and sailed on ships at the age of 15. It wasn't long before I got malaria fever, and I was sent back to Europe. I was very sick. One of the men on board the ship said to me, "You'll never get home to see your mom again. We are going to have to fix up the goat quarters, and make it into a church before we throw your dead body overboard." However, I believed that the God of my mother had power over me though I was so sick and weak. This happened in 1896. The following



***“The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”***

***2 Timothy 2:2***

year, 1897, was a good year at sea. I was healthy. We had good weather and no storms. I felt great, with no sickness.

In 1898 our ship sprang a leak and sank in the North Sea. I lost everything. We drifted in the water until rescued by an English fishing boat. During this experience the Lord was calling me. I prayed to the Lord and promised I would be a good young man, but I didn't keep my words of promise. I did my own thing and lived it up, and then I got sick once again. They had to get me to a hospital where I stayed three months, very near death. Once again I prayed and told the Lord I would change. Again, I did not keep my promise.

In 1899 I sailed, for a short time, on a boat where the captain prayed to Satan. The boat was in sad shape. Things were not good on board. “I'm going to hell on our next voyage,” the captain said. That's the way it went. On the next voyage the boat, men, even the mice onboard, were destroyed and went down into the sea.

Then in 1902, the last boat I worked on was called *Spira*. This boat sailed from Risør, Norway between Christmas and New Year's. I was on board that boat 4½ months. I left the boat when we landed the 17th of May in Lillesand, Norway. While on board that boat, the Lord really called me in a powerful way. In the middle of the night we were sailing in the North Sea. A voice called out my name, “Joakim!” I said, “hello,” but nobody answered back. I lay down once again and this voice called out once again, “Joakim!” That same night I had this dream:

There was going to be a war between Jesus and the devil, on a big open field next to a mountain. The devil, with all his followers, was ready to fight. I was

on the devil's side, standing not far from him. But then Jesus came, with just a few people following him. Jesus called out to me and said, “Joakim, whose side do you want to fight on?” I turned and saw millions of people on the devil's side. I didn't know what to answer Jesus. But then it was as if I could hear my mother whisper in my ear, “Remember, this is Jesus who is speaking to you.” Hearing this, I called out with a loud voice, “I want to be with you!”

As I was running over to Jesus, I woke up. Right then and there I asked Jesus to save me. I also prayed that I could become sick, so that I might be released from the ship, and then I did get sick. During that time of sickness I was saved. The Word of God opened my heart to the Lord. As I read the Bible, I felt like the lost son that had left his father, and now was returning home. I experienced the great, great love of my heavenly Father.

A pastor later said to me, “Just as that father loved his wayward son, who returned home penniless and in miserable shape, that's the way God loves you.”

“Oh my, is that true?” I said. “Has the Lord really loved me like that? Then I want to love him in return.” From that moment to this day, I have had assurance of salvation. Yes, Jesus is with you every day until your life is over. Don't wander off to the right or left. Remain in him and he will remain in you. In that way you will be building your life on a sure foundation. Yes, on a sure foundation, because Jesus is that foundation.

These are important things I want you to be aware of, Willmore. This has been my life experience these last 58 years. Nobody is like God. Nobody is as good

as God. If you want to see him and hear him, follow him. Jesus Christ has all the answers. He solves all of life's problems and puzzles. Take to heart that which you have heard. This is your grandfather's personal life experience.

I greet you with 2 Timothy 2:2, 11-13, 15—“You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others.

“This is a true saying: If we die with him we will also live with him. If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

“Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.”

I lovingly greet you. Greet your parents, sister, Leif, and Johannes.

Your grandfather,  
Joakim.

*Joakim Gundersen was born in Risør, Norway on August 26, 1880. He died March 15, 1972. Joakim and his wife Tora had ten children.*



## Winter Youth Retreat

**PAUL TJELTA**

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

**O**n January 5, 2018, around forty youth and youth leaders arrived at Village Creek Bible Camp outside Lansing, Iowa to spend the weekend considering the significance of being “Called Out” as described in 1 Peter 2:9. The gathering was the first of what is intended to be an annual winter youth retreat for churches in the southeastern portion of the CLB Central Region. The retreat included youth from congregations in Rochester, MN; Colfax, WI; Westby, WI; and Ottawa, IL.

The youth arrived on Friday evening and were immediately ushered into a fast-paced weekend of interaction and Bible study. Pastor Doug Rogness, West Campus Pastor for Triumph LBC in West Fargo, ND, was the main speaker for the weekend. He presented from 1 Peter 2 what it means to be “called out” as a believer in Christ: the identity that we are given through Christ, the obedience to God’s Word that flows out of identity in Christ, and the proclamation we make as we live in this identity. In addition to the main sessions with Pastor Rogness, there were four break-out sessions held on Saturday morning. Each session brought an opportunity for inspiration, challenge, and blessing as God’s Word was studied.

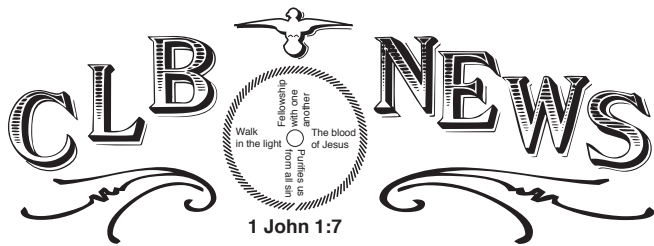
In addition to sharing around God’s Word, there was plenty of opportunity for other types of fun and fellowship. The weekend included a “Dad Joke” tournament among the youth leaders, won by the unflappable Pastor Mark Nienow. Saturday’s main activity was an Olympic Challenge in which teams competed in broomball, basketball, volleyball, and dodgeball. Late night snow-tubing wrapped up the outside activities on a busy Saturday for the campers.

The retreat concluded on Sunday, with the encouragement to live out the identity that we have received in Jesus Christ. Throughout the weekend, the youth were led in songs of praise and gospel proclamation by worship leader Christina Eltrevoog from Ottawa, IL. The youth returned to their churches refreshed and strengthened by the weekend of fellowship, learning, and worship. We thank the Lord for his blessing on this event and look forward to gathering again next winter!

*Rev. Paul Tjelta serves as pastor of Bethesda Lutheran Brethren Church in Westby, Wisconsin.*

### Photo

1. Top photo: Rev. Mark Nienow of Gethsemane Lutheran Brethren Church in Rochester, Minnesota leading CLB Central Region Youth at Village Creek Bible Camp in Lansing, Iowa on January 5, 2018.



MARCH/APRIL 2018

## Olsen Ordained



L to R: Rev. Novy Yiu, Central Regional Pastor Stan Olsen, Eastern Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty, Rev. Andrew Olsen, Rev. Erick Sorensen, Elders Ray Spicer, John Olsen, Lloyd Lister, and Stanley Ramsdal.

On December 17, 2017, Andrew Olsen was ordained at 59th Street Lutheran Brethren Church in Brooklyn, New York. Central Regional Pastor Stan Olsen led the service.

## Langager Called Home



David Langager, age 94, passed away at his home in Mesa, Arizona on January 7, 2018. David was born on June 13, 1923 in Ray, North Dakota. David earned his undergraduate from Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and completed his graduate studies at Lutheran Brethren Seminary in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Throughout his adult life, David and his wife Esther served as missionaries and church planters in Japan and the United States. David was a mentor to many young pastors as well. Blessed be the memory of David Langager.

## Aase Called Home

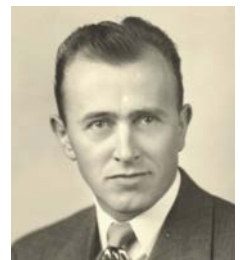


George Aase, age 89, of Fergus Falls, Minnesota died Wednesday, February 21, 2018. George was born on September 14, 1928 to George and Caroline Aase in Brooklyn, New York. In 1952 he married Alice Helgesen. George attended Shelton College and graduated from Lutheran Brethren Seminary in 1953. George served churches in ND, NJ, NY, and MN. He served as secretary for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren for many years. His greatest joy was serving the Lord in ministry and he will be greatly missed.

## Haugland Called Home

Torgeir Andrew Haugland, age 89, passed away on July 19, 2017 in Kent, Washington. He was born in Brooklyn, New York on April 23, 1928 to Hans and Ida Haugland. He attended Lutheran Brethren Bible School in Fergus Falls, Minnesota where he met his future wife, Helen Watson. He then attended City College of New York while courting Helen. After graduation and marriage he returned to Fergus Falls to begin training at Lutheran Brethren Seminary. A few years later he obtained a master's degree from Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. Torgeir loved the Lord and served him as a Lutheran Brethren and American Sunday School Union pastor. Blessed be the memory of Torgeir Haugland.

## Larsen Called Home



Morris Larsen, age 90, of Fergus Falls, Minnesota died Tuesday, January 16, 2018. Morris was born on January 18, 1927, in Rochert, Minnesota, the son of John and Ingaborg Larsen. He graduated from Seattle Pacific University in Washington, before completing his education at Lutheran Brethren Seminary. On June 22, 1951, he married Myrtle Esther Kivley in Ferndale Washington. Morris served churches in North Dakota, Iowa, Washington, and Minnesota. Morris and Myrtle also served as missionaries in Japan for 20 years.

*Faith & Fellowship* is the official publication of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, 1020 W. Alcott Ave., P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655, issued six times a year (January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December) by Faith and Fellowship Publishing, 1020 W. Alcott Ave., P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655. Phone (218)736-7357. The viewpoints expressed in the articles are those of the authors and may or may not necessarily reflect the official position of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America (CLBA). Periodicals Postage Paid at Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538.

(USPS 184-600) • (ISSN 10741712)

SUBSCRIPTIONS: *Faith & Fellowship* is offered to its readers at no charge. We would encourage your continued support with a donation, and if you would like to be on our mailing list, please contact our office. Periodicals Postage Paid at Fergus Falls, Minnesota. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please give both old and new addresses and allow four weeks.

Direct all correspondence, including submission of articles, to: *Faith & Fellowship*, P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655; Telephone, (218)736-7357; e-mail, [ffpress@clba.org](mailto:ffpress@clba.org); FAX, (218)736-2200.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Faith & Fellowship*, P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538-0655



# Laughing at God's Plan

In Genesis 17 and 18, on separate occasions, both Abraham and Sarah struggle to contain their laughter at God's promise to bless them with a son. The childless couple are nearing 100 and 90 years old, respectively. What a ludicrous idea! God has been too slow to keep his promise!

God promised them a great nation of descendants, including One who will bless the whole world. In their advanced age, Sarah and Abraham see only one way God's promise can come true, and that's their way: His name is Ishmael, the child of Abraham and Sarah's maid Hagar. He's already 13 years old. Abraham seeks God's approval (Gen. 17:18), "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

Now God reveals his grace in a surprising way. Their plan wasn't good. It wasn't God's will. But God, in grace, rescues Hagar in her great distress (Gen. 16:7-13), and he blesses Ishmael (Gen. 17:20). How many times have we come up with "better ideas"—our own plan—hoping God will bless it, yet knowing in our hearts it isn't honoring him and we are laughing at his plan? Yet God can work our failures into the big picture of his plan—if he wills and for his glory. Consider David and Bathsheba, for example, who became forebears of Jesus Christ.

What is God's plan? God's plan is to bring life to a world of people bound for death. This plan of redemption for sinful human beings is the greatest plan in all of history. God is not slow in keeping his promises, and his plan is not laughable. It is perfect.

Martha thought Jesus was too slow. "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). But Jesus' timing was just right. His plan was not to rescue Lazarus from illness; it was to bring him new life.

God's great plan of redemption brings life by giving you Christ's righteousness. In the early stages God's plan required a miraculous baby—Isaac. At his birth, God must have been smiling, if not laughing, because God delivered on his promise while honoring the marriage of Sarah and Abraham. Something they thought impossible.

But Isaac's birth was nothing compared to that second miracle baby. Jesus was born as both God and man, so that he could die on the cross for you, then rise from death to bring new life to all who receive him. How gracious is God! And how wonderful is his plan, and his love, for you!

The plan ended the way God wanted it to end, not with death, but with life—the resurrection.

It's a reminder that, in the end, God always has the last laugh.

*Rev. Brent Juliot serves as pastor of Oak Ridge Lutheran Brethren Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin.*

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