

Faith & Fellowship

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King me



KING
me

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Quiet Moments

Email prayer requests to: pray@clba.org

King me!

TROY TYSDAL

If you have ever played Checkers, then you’ve probably been frustrated by the limited movement of the stones (the pieces). The stones move in one direction. They cannot move to the left or to the right, nor can they turn back. Their only option is straight across the board. Life, apart from Christ, is like that. Apart from Christ, we are limited in our movement—destined to continue down the path we are on—a path away from God.

For the stone there is hope at the end of the board. If it makes the right moves, if it avoids getting killed, when it reaches the end of the board it is crowned as the player calls out, “King me!” It doesn’t work like that for us. No matter



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what moves we make, or how hard we try, we never reach the end of the board.

However, in a surprising twist, we have a King who comes to us—a King who left heaven and was crucified for us. This King transforms us—turns us around and reveals God. Like the stone that has reached the end of the board, in Christ we

are crowned—claimed for the kingdom of God—empowered by his Spirit.

Receive him, and be transformed. Take up your cross—and hang on. He will place you exactly where you need to be.

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.

BC18: Revisited

BRENT JULIOT

True confession: Driving up Interstate 94 on June 8, I was having second thoughts, or at least a powerful sense of “non-excitement.” As a veteran of nearly thirty Church of the Lutheran Brethren Annual (and now Biennial) Conventions, I wondered whether this was really necessary. Delegates drive or fly great distances to attend. They sacrifice five or six precious days of their summer. For what, exactly?

After all, we only meet every two years now, and the Council of Directors represents our CLB churches with all the business concerns and decision-making between conventions. Would it matter whether we attended or not?

True repentance: “How quickly we forget!” My blasé attitude was cured quickly as the convention began. I remembered exactly why we do this... Every convention has its own circumstances and specific theme, so the specific benefits and blessings of each convention will vary somewhat, but they will always be similar to these highlights from BC18.

Fellowship: There were many friends, new and old, just getting acquainted or catching up on the changes of recent years or months. And you never know who you will talk to, or when a casual conversation will turn deep. For me, there were a couple of unexpected but very encouraging conversations with retired pastors. The whole experience embodied *koinonia*, the biblical term for the connection people share through our common friend, Jesus.

Encouragement: Who doesn’t need this? Some of the encouragement comes through equipping. There were four workshop tracks for CLB delegates. I was encouraged specifically by Dr. Eugene Boe’s four sessions on “preaching to the heart,” while one of my church’s delegates



On Sunday June 10, the Central Region repeated as champions at the 2018 CLB Jubilee Old Tyme Baseball Tournament.

greatly appreciated the discipleship track. The convention business sessions became less about “business” and more about reviewing what God has been doing recently through each of the synod ministry departments, being reminded of who serves God on our behalf, and gaining insight into where and how they serve. The overall impact was a sense of how great is our God, to use us in significant ways to advance his kingdom.

Submission: This is not something that usually draws us to a convention. But think about it—if this is not key in our experience, we have probably missed the point. This convention’s theme was simply “King me.” That carries some intentional ambiguity. The convention speakers—in plenary and worship sessions—worked out this theme using Jesus’ parables in Matthew 13. In briefest summary, “King me” implies that we have a King, that we own him personally as our gracious King, submitting to him with joy. Then, the obvious checkerboard analogy reminds us that, like a “kinged” piece, we are now wonderfully commissioned and empowered by our God for his service in mission.

Resolve: We concluded, appropriately, at the foot of the cross, sharing Communion

together before hitting the road. Delegates were convinced of our calling and mission, as a Church. We returned home to communicate all this to our churches.

On the last morning, I asked one of my church’s delegates, a first-time attendee, what they thought of it. “It was wonderful!”

How could I ever have doubted it?



KING
me



For convention info, visit: www.clba.org/bc18

Rev. Brent Juliot serves as editor of Faith & Fellowship magazine and as pastor of Oak Ridge Lutheran Brethren Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin.



On the morning of June 10, 2018, convention attendees were encouraged to spread out and worship at one of the many CLB area churches participating in the convention theme. President Paul Larson spoke at Good Shepherd LBC in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

The Glorious Engrained in the Small



www.clba.org/bc18-sermons

PAUL LARSON

May I introduce you to Methuselah? *Methuselah, the Judean date palm tree?* He's only thirteen years old. The thing is: we thought he didn't exist. We thought he was extinct.

I love this title of an article about Methuselah: "Extinct Tree Resurrected from Ancient Seeds is now a Dad." Does *that* not grab your attention?

Here's the story: For thousands of years, the Judean date palm was a staple crop in the Kingdom of Judea—valued resource, a symbol of blessing. Thick forests of Judean palms covered the Jordan River valley from the Sea of Galilee to the shores of the Dead Sea. It was highly

valued and hunted much like ivory tusk; its value became its demise and eventual extinction. By 500 AD the once plentiful tree disappeared.

But, hidden away, seeds remained. In 1963, six seeds were found by chance in a jar in Herod the Great's palace in the 2,000-year-old ruins of Masada. The seeds were kept in a drawer in Tel Aviv University for the next 42 years. Finally, Dr. Elaine Solowey decided to try planting three seeds. She was skeptical, supposing the seeds' endosperm, which fuels early growth, would no longer be viable.

She was soon proven wrong! After eight weeks, a small green shoot emerged from

one seed, producing a sapling unseen for centuries. The plant was nicknamed Methuselah. It's the oldest known germination of a seed in the world.

Now the best part! In 2011, Methuselah produced flowers... and now: He has become a father! Solowey hopes to someday plant an ancient date grove.

Improbable Progress! Invisible Potency! Unveiled Mystery!

The power of life is in the *seed!*

MATTHEW 13:31-33

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

Matthew 13:31-32

when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Don’t you hate being small? It invites our “darker” thoughts. I have a small pickup, a small motorcycle, I catch small fish... How about you: do you like being small? Maybe it’s the stations in life not arrived at, significance not attained, the very personal dismay of how one’s life is measured by family, or wealth, success or happiness... Don’t you hate being small?

How about you, Church—don’t you hate being small? Attendance of your congregation slipping off due to post-Christendom or the bright blossoming church down the street? Grandiose stories of mega-conversions on international mission fields and at home still evading us?

What about the CLB? “Church of the Brethren Who?” Bare-bone budgets, layoffs, vulnerability... and on some dark nights, the wondering of *relevance?* Identity, confidence, hope—wrapped up in a *number* rather than a *Person*.

Yeah. We don’t always handle “small” well.

Jesus tells a story about smallness, and greatness. “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed... the smallest of all seeds...”

Here Jesus reveals the kingdom’s “Improbable Progress.” Not Mission Impossible, but Kingdom Improbable!

Can’t appearances be deceiving? Jesus’ kingdom (present and arriving) sure looks small! It looks like *nothing* compared to Rome, to Judaism, to the pagan religions of the Greeks, Romans and others. Yet Jesus predicts the present extraordinary arrival of his kingdom, even while surrounded by a motley band of semi-literate misfits! And Jesus, the leader of this kingdom, is on the way to a criminal’s crucifixion!

But Jesus says, “Just you wait and see.”

And yes, Christianity has *boomed* all over the earth since Jesus told this parable.

But what about today? Are we fading? Are our best years behind us? This 21st century looks grim, the Church in decline. We hear of “post-Christendom,” and the marginalizing of the Church.

When, Jesus? When will your kingdom come? He says, “It’s here right now.”

In this parable, I believe the seed is Jesus! The man planting the seed is God the Father, who gave his only begotten Son, and sent/planted him in the Garden of Israel.

Isaiah 53:2 describes the Messiah and his kingdom: “He grew up before them like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground.” Jesus speaks of his death this way: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).

Yes, Jesus is the *seed* of this kingdom!

My sin (our sin) is to think myself large when I am small, great when I am weak, something when I am nothing. In this whole talk of kingdom, do I feel angst, anguish and anxiety because I’m wondering, worrying, thinking the kingdom is essentially about me? That it is me?

And our sin is to think Christ and his kingdom small when it is great! When in the gospel He is all, and all His is mine.

God forgive us.

Jesus says: My kingdom is *now*. Here. Advancing. Unstoppable. “Kingdom Improbable (but certain) Progress!”

Then Jesus’ twin parable speaks of the kingdom’s “Invisible Power.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.” Jesus’ point: His kingdom has an invasive, invisible potency at work within the world... and perhaps also within you.

I watched my mother make bread with yeast. She would knead a little bit of germ-spored yeast into the inert pile of flour dough, then set the apparently-tomb-sealed-dead lumps aside under some linen towel. Hours later, voila!

That tiny little bit of yeast had worked its living way through the whole batch of dough!

Jesus says his kingdom comes like this too. It comes to men and women, little babies and brilliant scholars! And *his life* melts, works, worms—*leavens*—its way into our dead inert thickness.

In the Bible leaven is most often used as a symbol of sin. Jesus warns against the hypocritical leaven of the Pharisees. Paul tells Corinthian believers to rid themselves of the leaven of immorality.

But now Jesus takes the insidious and seditious image of leaven and *converts* it for something glorious! This is a stunning throw-down against the opposition. Sin, like leaven, is known to be contagiously invasive, growing and spawning, rampantly reproducing in the heart, in one’s neighbor, in a nation. But Jesus’ coming kingdom with his gospel of forgiveness and new life has far *more* invasive and contagious disciple-making-reproductive potency than that other kingdom! Where Satan’s sin-leaven abounds, Jesus’ grace-leaven abounds all the more! Jesus says, “This is *my* kingdom!”

Do you ever wonder whether Christianity will survive? Your congregation will survive? The CLB?

Believe! Kingdom Improbable Progress! Invisible Potency!

In faith, we pray: “God our Father, Jesus our King: King me! Kingdom me! Your kingdom come! Your kingdom come to us, and through us, to neighbors near and oceans away, until your kingdom returns *for us*.”



Rev. Paul Larson is President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

The Price of the Pearl

VERN BAARDSON

Not so long ago I wrapped up my devotional reading in the book of Judges. The story of the Judges is preceded by a 400-year span of amazing leadership—Moses, this incredible servant-prophet of God. Then the baton is passed to Joshua, who leads Israel into the Promised Land. But after Joshua dies, there are 400 years of craziness. The last verse of Judges says, “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in their own eyes” (21:25). They got caught up in the influences of the culture and the nations around them and everything they knew seemed to disintegrate. There was no king.

We were made to have a king. We need a king. We are *not* the king. When each person in Israel tried to do what was right in their own eyes, they experienced a cycle of pain.

Who rules, and reigns, in your life? Jesus said:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:44-46).

In both parables there is a recognition of great need. The first man seems to stumble upon the treasure; the other man is more intentional in his search, focused on his task. But both recognize great need.

A few years ago, I had the privilege of meeting David Wheaton, a tennis player from Minnesota. David started out his career with big dreams. In 1991, he had such success that he was invited to the Grand Slam Cup tournament of champions, and he won! He was awarded the largest single cash prize ever, at that time, for a tennis player—two million dollars. He described the adulation, the

confetti, the crowd going crazy. As a young man, he had reached the pinnacle of all his hopes and dreams. It was amazing.

Thirty minutes later, he found himself in an empty locker room and he thought to himself, “It’s not enough. There is something missing.” He had it all! He had everything he could imagine, but it wasn’t enough. He had not yet seen what is of greatest value.

By God’s incredible grace, David Wheaton would later come to discover that he had been created for something much bigger, as he came to know Jesus Christ as his savior. His whole way of thinking had been transformed, changed.

It’s only when we begin to understand our great need, that we begin to understand what it means to be brought into the kingdom of heaven. In our parables the men understand the value of what they’ve found. The first man sells everything he has to buy the field. The merchant who finds the pearl sells everything he has to buy it. Reading these parables, I was reminded of Jesus’ comment to his disciples: “I must go away.” He was about to purchase something no one else could purchase. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. Reflecting on this, I wondered, “Jesus, if you’re the merchant... am I the pearl? That can’t possibly be.” There is no one righteous... no, not one.

In 1843, Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. Here is Dickens’ description of a very successful man focused on his ambitions—Ebenezer Scrooge:

Oh! He was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose,

shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always along with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn’t thaw it one degree at Christmas. External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge... The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast only of the advantage over him in one respect. They often “came down” handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Glad you’re not like him? So said one Pharisee a long time ago.

Who could ever see anything worth saving in someone like Ebenezer Scrooge... or someone like me, or you?

Jesus came seeking lost ones. Could it be that you, that the people of this world, are of great value to him? In Deuteronomy, Moses says that God’s people are his treasured possession.

What gives you value?

Is it what you do, who you know, or is it this incredibly simple thing: That God, who created you in his image, loves you? He loves you so much in all of your brokenness, in all of your sinfulness, in all of that death that lingers in you. God has expressed his love for you in this, “While you were still sinners... Christ died for you” (Romans 5:8). The just for the unjust.

One night Ebenezer Scrooge was visited by three spirits. Just before the visitation of the second ghost, Scrooge finds himself back in his bedroom. A very familiar, lifeless place. But he sees a strange, almost blinding, light shining from an adjoining room. Dickens writes:

The moment Scrooge’s hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone

a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened... Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

"Come in," exclaimed the Ghost. "Come in, and know me better, man."

I think Charles Dickens, in a moment, captured the invitation of God to those of us who have not yet seen or discovered a great treasure.

The invitation of God has been there from the beginning. An invitation to broken people to come into relationship with him.

Hear this word from your Savior: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

Dear servants, the Savior invites you to come, and experience his reign and rule in your lives.

Watch the video:
www.clba.org/bc18-sermons



Rev. Vern Beardson serves the West Campus of Triumph Lutheran Brethren Church in West Fargo, North Dakota as the Congregational Life Pastor.



Rev. Vern Beardson sharing Jesus through song at the 2018 Biennial Convention.



Rev. Roger Viksnes preaching to the convention on the morning of June 12, 2018.

The Day of the Dragnet

ROGER VIKSNES

Much of the material in the kingdom parables of Matthew 13 revolves around farming. But the last parable references fishing, instead. However, it is not the fishing reference that we are accustomed to.

In Matthew 4:18 we read, “As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were *casting a net* into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’”

The Greek word for net in that passage is *Amphiblēstron*. This net was a large circle with weights around the outer edge. The trained fisherman would watch until

he saw a school of fish, and then he would spin that net out over the water, opening it to a full circle, and capturing the fish as it sank around them. That is the net we find in the context of Jesus’ invitation to be fishers of men. But that is not the type of net we find in the parable of Matthew 13.

Instead, we find a different Greek term indicating a different kind of net. It is the word *Sagene* and it speaks about a very large net—a troll net or dragnet.

R.C.H. Lenski says some of these nets covered a half-mile in length. Such a net could not be thrown. It had to be slowly dragged. One end of this net was attached to the shoreline, while the other end was attached to a boat. As the boat left

the shore, it pulled the net, stretching it out tight. Then the boat moved in a slow circle, until it came all the way back to where the net was attached to the shore. In this way, the huge net gathered all the life that was in the sea area surrounded by the drag of the net.

Understanding how this particular net works helps us understand Jesus’ teaching in his parable of Matthew 13:47-50.

Jesus said, “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets,

“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.”

Matthew 13:47-48

but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Plain and simple, this parable is about judgment. This parable is about hell. As much as that topic makes us uncomfortable, as much as it has become out of vogue to talk about or even to believe in its existence, the fact is that Jesus talked about hell a lot. He described it as a place of eternal torment, of unquenchable fire, where people will gnash their teeth in anguish. He called hell a place of “outer darkness.” Jesus talked about hell more than he talked about heaven, and he described it more vividly.

Now earlier in chapter 13, Jesus also spoke about judgment in the parable of the wheat and the weeds. He said the two would grow together until the harvest or judgment, meaning that there will be a long time in the kingdom before the harvest, for our God is patient, not wanting any to be lost but all to be saved. (See 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4.)

But in the parable of the net, there is one simple point. It is not co-existence. It is separation. “The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous, and throw them into the fiery furnace...” (Matthew 13:49). Jesus used the casting net of Matthew 4 to speak in a positive way about the disciples catching people

for Christ. With the dragnet of chapter 13, however, Jesus illustrates the gathering of people for judgment, and the angels are the agents of God’s judgment.

Now in an attempt to be gracious, kind, or fair, we could refrain from talking about such a horrible topic as hell. This would be like a doctor keeping silent about a patient’s fatal disease. Instead the doctor, not wanting the patient to be sad, tells the patient everything is ok. But everything isn’t ok. They are going to die. And the net is coming ever closer and closer.

The prophet Joel writes:

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come (Joel 2:1-2).

It is vitally important to note that Jesus doesn’t talk about hell just to make people sad. He didn’t come to earth to “rub it in” that hell was coming. Instead, he speaks of hell for the purpose of warning, just as God graciously told the Hebrews about the last plague in Egypt and gave them a way to be saved from it—to be passed over.

And it works. Did you notice that there were good fish in this net (verse

48)? Romans 3:10 tells us that no one is good... no one is righteous. So how are there good fish in the net? It is by grace alone that those who repent and believe are not only rescued, but are transformed from “bad” to “good” and from “wicked” to “righteous.” What good news!

There is one more important thing to remember at the close. We aren’t the ones with our hands on the dragnet. It is the angels who hold this net. There may be times that we, in our flesh, want to pull in that judgment net a little faster on someone who is a thorn in our side. But that is not our job. Instead, we are given the casting net and told to fish for people—before the dragnet gets all the way to shore—so that they too may by grace be collected with the “good” and the “righteous.”

Watch the video:
www.clba.org/bc18-sermons



Rev. Roger Viksnes serves as lead pastor of Bethany Lutheran Brethren Church in East Hartland, Connecticut.

A Legacy of Generosity

ROY HEGGLAND

Have you thought about how you will feel about God’s mission on earth after you have died? Do you think that God’s will that all people be saved will no longer matter to you? Do you think that the joy of being in Heaven and being completely united with Jesus will mean you have lost all interest in this world? I am going to speculate for a moment and suggest that, once we are in Heaven and in complete union with the Trinity, we will be intensely interested in what God is interested in and will desire much more completely than we did during our lifetimes to see his will be done. Revelation 7:9-12 gives us a picture of the saints who died during the tribulation uniting together in a great chorus shouting, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!” Yes, I believe we will be finally and completely in tune with our Father’s heart and truly care that those who are still lost come to faith.

As you may know, in my position as Associate for Biblical Stewardship, I teach about stewardship in our churches, write about stewardship in our *Faith & Fellowship* magazine and provide estate planning seminars and services, without charge, for members and friends of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren who wish to plan for their estate. You may be asking yourself, how does the first section of this report have anything to do with stewardship and estate planning? After all, after we die, our time to do anything on earth has ended. Or has it?

What if you could still be part of the Great Commission to “make disciples” after you have moved from this world? What if there were a way to honor the desire of your heavenly Father that all be saved while you are in his presence in Heaven? Now, I am referring to that period after we die and before the great white throne judgment. There is evidence in Revelation that we will have some



William_Potter/Stock

understanding of what is happening on earth during that period in Heaven.

Many of you have lived your lives seeking to do the will of God. You have love and concern for the lost and have shared the good news of salvation with your neighbors. You have taught in Sunday School. You have sung in the choir or praise band. You have been a pastor or missionary or in other fulltime ministry. (Although we are all in fulltime ministry even if we don’t always think of it that way.) And just as importantly, you have given your resources so that pastors and missionaries can be trained and sent to preach, so that new churches can be planted, so that pastors can be cared for, and so that people here in North America and around the globe will hear about the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

If you have been faithful in being generous in giving to God’s mission during your life, why not continue that generosity when you die? With proper estate planning, you can make sure that a portion of your resources will continue to supply the needs of our joint ministries after you have left here and gone into the presence of the Lord. We all want to make sure our children are properly cared for after we die. Why wouldn’t we want

the work of our Father and our family, the Church, to be properly cared for also? You have the opportunity to do this through proper estate planning.

To date, well over a hundred of your fellow members and friends of our congregations have taken the time to start the process to put an estate plan in place. Many have finished the process and are happy that they have done so. If you would like to have us prepare a full estate plan for you, without charge to you, please have your congregation invite me to conduct an estate planning seminar at your church or cluster of churches.

May God bless you as you generously give during your lifetime and as you leave a legacy of generosity and a testimony of faithfulness even after you have gone to be with him.

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

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WM Convention Recap

CHERYL OLSEN

Saturday, June 9, 2018 was memorable! It was the first day of the CLB Biennial Convention—a “Day of Equipping”—and 120 women attended our WMCLB convention day, as other training events were taking place simultaneously. Here’s how we were equipped:

We worshiped our King, encouraged through the music of Rachel Roy from Mt. Bethel, Pennsylvania.

We listened as Director of Women’s Ministries, Ruth Vallevik, opened the Scriptures for us. Drawing on various Bible passages, as well as Luther’s Small Catechism, she laid a foundation for understanding the kingdom of God and responding to the grace of our Heavenly King.

We were touched as a girls’ choral group from Hillcrest Academy sang, and as Lexi Tungseth shared her testimony. Though her Dad passed away suddenly just weeks before her graduation, she is drawing strength from her Savior, Jesus.

We learned from Gretchen Ronnevik that our King desires to work through us, in bringing his kingdom here on earth, but that we don’t have to “have it all together” before we start. Our power comes from him!

We were surprised by this year’s Missionary Greetings! In addition to letters read, we saw Missionary Kay A. live, onscreen from France, and she saw us all waving to her. She even answered audience questions! We enjoyed greetings from Sandy Christofferson in Taiwan and Mandy B. and Sonja N. in Chad, who walked us through the Welcome Center, over to meet her neighbors!

We enjoyed a meal, and did some business. We re-elected Kim Goodman as Treasurer, and were introduced to Rachel Grothe, our new Information Coordinator. The 2017-18 budget was met, thanks to God, and you, his people! Projects for 2018-19 are:

Focus Project: “Power for Kay!”—

Our newest missionary to Chad, Kay A., will be bringing the gospel and love of Jesus to village women. We want to provide the blessing of power and running water in the hot, dry climate of rural Africa. We will supply the main components of a solar system for electricity, a solar refrigerator, solar freezer, and a submersible pump to bring water from the well which will be dug.

Vision 2020—Strategic planning for the future: Virtual Bible studies, meetings with missionaries, etc.

Heart to Heart: Funding Director Ruth Vallevik, to travel more extensively in two Regions each year.

S.W.E.E.T. Retreat: Retreat for Seminary Women to Encourage, Equip, and Train them for ministry.

Crisis Care Fund: Caring for ministry wives and families in crisis (contact Ruth Vallevik for more information, or contribute: ruthalicev@gmail.com).

H.E.L.P.: Household, Equipment, and Linen Project for missionary needs (send HELP contributions to Joy Mathiesen, 1421 Highway Terrace, Fergus Falls, MN 56537).

Join in giving to: WMCLB Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN, 56538-0655

We went deeper in two afternoon workshop sessions with women who shared the passion God has given them for various ministries: mentoring, outreach, Women’s Ministry, and studying God’s Word.

May God continue to equip us to love and serve his kingdom!

Cheryl Olsen is the Faith & Fellowship correspondent for WMCLB.





On June 11, 2018, Rev. Ben and Sara Hosch were commissioned as missionaries to the Hakka people of Taiwan and Rev. Jason and Savanna Rogness were commissioned to plant a church in Parker, Colorado.



www.clba.org/bc18-videos

New Hope for Parker, CO

JASON ROGNESS

I walked into the fellowship hall of Bethel Church in Fergus Falls, scoping out the tables for an open chair, and better yet, a spot around good conversation. The main session of the 2014 Biennial Convention had just kicked off our time together, and the usual fellowship around coffee and cookies commenced. In the middle of the room, sitting by himself, was a man and a conversation I couldn't pass up. I had never met him, but had heard stories from my mom, who had served as secretary in the Lutheran Brethren Home Missions

office for a short time while she attended Bible School.

Age separated us by well over 50 years, but the relative speed of our steps was irrelevant as I sensed our common hearts for ministry. So I grabbed a coffee, plucked a cookie off the serving table, and took a seat next to Harland Helland.

Little did I know, this would be my first and last conversation with him. After a short discussion about ministry in Arvada, Colorado, the conversation moved to mission. I shared about opportunities I had with some young

men in the community, and my heart for the need for a greater Lutheran Brethren presence in the greater Denver area. As I explained that statement, Harland's eyes lit up and he responded with an exuberant, "Oh boy! That sounds like a great idea!" I imagine that Harland spoke a similar statement to many other people who were sharing dreams of reaching the lost for Jesus. He had been a church planter himself, and later he assisted many others in making that same dream a reality. As director of CLB Home Missions for 16 years, Harland was known to be one of



Rev. Jason and Savanna Rogness with President Larson after their commissioning service at BC18.

the most influential mission mobilizers and church planters the CLB has ever had.

My coffee cup dried up and the cookie long gone, Harland continued munching his, and listening intently to a dreamer talk about ideas of what the Lord can do with willing servants on mission. When the conversation wrapped up, Harland spoke four simple words to me. “Now go do it!” A few months later, I heard that Harland passed away. I wept. I thanked the Lord for that conversation, and those four words of encouragement he spoke to me. I had no idea what the fulfillment of God’s plan would look like. I still don’t. But I knew the Lord had initiated that conversation that evening, and it was the beginning of something new.

Today as I write this, I am sitting in the limbo between announcing my resignation from Community In Christ Church in Arvada, and our commissioning to be missionaries and church planters in Parker, a fast growing city on the opposite end of Denver. It’s a community that my wife Savanna and I have grown to love. Ever since Savanna got a teaching job there four years ago, the Lord has been revealing to us his plan for reaching Parker. It started with his provision through a school community that has a few Lutheran Brethren connections. It’s continued through growing relationships with students, which give us a natural connection to parents. And although the school is a private Christian institution, there is a growing percentage of students who are coming from non-Christian

homes. Savanna coaches volleyball, and I do the announcing any time they need me for athletic events. These natural avenues to families have allowed us to come alongside people who have specific needs that we can help with. We’ve also become part of a “Thriving Parents” group on campus that offers biblical truth and mentorship to parents who are looking for help with kids in their teenage years. Often these relationships stay casual, but sometimes they grow. When that happens, it can naturally grow into a disciple-able relationship.

This process follows the words of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 10:7-14:

As you go, proclaim this message: “The kingdom of heaven has come near.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.

Lives are changed when the gospel is proclaimed. But too often we spend all

our time trying to convince people who won’t receive the message. Jesus tells us that we can move on to the next person. As we grow in relationships and continue to faithfully proclaim that the “kingdom of heaven is at hand,” when someone does turn their ear to the Word, we pursue that relationship.

You might ask: “What does that look like?” We have found that being able to effectively tell our story (which is Jesus’ story in us), opens doors to share the hope that is missing in their lives. As that relationship grows, other lives are touched and disciples are made. This gave us a clear vision for our name—New Hope Church. Our goal at New Hope is to make disciples to the fourth generation. At that point it becomes a movement. Once it’s a movement, it gets much harder to stop.

That fourth generation disciple may not even know the first or second generation. And that’s ok. It’s not about us anyway. We are called to make disciples. This is the “go do it” that Harland Helland was so passionate about, and we can trust the Lord to build his Church.

Rev. Jason Rogness and his wife Savanna have been called by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren to be church planters in Parker, Colorado.

*To support this initiative visit:
www.CLBA.org/giving*

Click “Financially Support the CLB” and designate your gift under North American Mission to Parker, Colorado.



Dan Venberg, LBIM's Mission Mobilizer and Recruiter, interviewing Rev. Ben and Sara Hosch about their call to the unreached Hakka people of Taiwan.

Called to Taiwan

www.clba.org/bc18-lifting-our-eyes



INTERVIEW WITH BEN AND SARA HOSCH

Dan Venberg: Ben and Sara Hosch, you have been called and commissioned to serve as LBIM missionaries in Taiwan. Jesus Christ promises to be with you in this. We as the Church of the Lutheran Brethren want you to know that we are also with you, and are blessed to have the privilege of commissioning you and sending you.

Ben, tell us about your calling to Taiwan. You have been preparing for this for years. One might ask, "Is all this worth it?" Tell us why you obviously feel that it is all worth it.

Ben Hosch: We had someone ask us once, with very real concern in her voice, "Why do you want to leave? Why do you want to go to Taiwan?" I think she

just thought we wanted to go on some fun adventure. I think she thought it was dangerous for us to leave the US. But the only good answer I had for her was, "We're going because many people in Taiwan don't know who Jesus is." I don't know if it was a good enough answer for her, but it was for me. When I think of the people of Taiwan who are still unreached with the gospel, then there's a lot at stake. You can say that you have unreached people at your workplace, but they really aren't unreached, because they have you. You can tell them about Jesus. There are Christian radio and TV stations. There's at least one church in almost every town in North America. People here have the opportunity to hear the gospel, whether they want to believe or not. People in

North America are not "unreached," at least not in the way other people in the world are unreached.

People in Taiwan are unreached. People in Taiwan don't even have the opportunity to believe the gospel or not, because they have never heard it. There are no Christian radio or TV stations. They don't have Christian friends or coworkers. There probably isn't even a church in their city. They have no opportunity to hear, much less believe. Let's think about that for a moment: They have no opportunity to even hear about Jesus. Is it worth it to go? Is the waiting and preparation and moving worth it? Is it worth it for somebody to hear the gospel who has never heard it before? Is it worth it if somebody puts their trust in Jesus

The *Unreached* Hakka of Taiwan

Taiwan is an island of 23 million served by 1,205 missionaries.



The Hakkas' religious beliefs and customs are similar to those of other traditional Chinese. Ancestor worship is one of the biggest stumbling blocks that potential Hakka Christians face. It is believed that when a Hakka person becomes a Christian, they forsake their

ancestors and close family relations. Because the Hakka people are very conscious of social pressure, both from their families and neighbors, it takes great determination to follow Jesus. Less than 3/1000 (0.3%) are Christian.

For more information contact: lbim@CLBA.org

Christ and is welcomed into his Church because we answered the call to go? Yes, a thousand times yes.

Dan Venberg: Sara, as you process what it means to follow Christ to Taiwan, leaving family and friends, what sacrifices are looming large for your family... and how do you find peace about that?

Sara Hosch: Honestly, God has been teaching us so much already about our worldly possessions and just how temporary they are. When it comes down to it, I think the sacrifice for us lies in relationships—missing out on being near to family and friends, and family events that we will only see from afar. But we know God is calling us to Taiwan. This has been on our hearts for five years. And as we look back over the years we see God's faithfulness in each season, and how he was with us. I often remind myself of his promises. Reading and speaking his Word brings me comfort when I am feeling overwhelmed. God's Word does promise that he is with us, but it also talks about the sacrifices that his disciples made, and the Sacrifice he made. The last few weeks the kids and I have been talking about how big God is. He is bigger than any of our fears, and he will be with us as we move, because God is always with us.

Dan Venberg: Upon arriving in Taiwan, you will be joining our team of LBIM missionaries already there. Can you tell us a little more about how you will fit into this ministry and what your ministry will entail in the upcoming years?

Ben Hosch: After our first two years of language learning, we will be working with

Zhubei Victory Church, which is outside of Hsinchu. The church is in a rapidly growing area and is seeing growth in members and attendees. Taiwan is seeing steady immigration from the rest of Asia and taking in expatriates from all over the world. They have plans for new outreach ministries as their city continues to grow. The Church of the Lutheran Brethren in Taiwan wants to plant new churches in areas that don't have a church. So, we have the opportunity to help a growing church do outreach in their community as we continue to get comfortable with the language and the culture. But we also have future opportunities to further spread the gospel in Taiwan by helping to plant new churches.

Dan Venberg: The CLB seeks to be a disciple-making movement, both here in North America and to the ends of the earth. We want to send more missionaries. We want to plant new churches. We want to make disciples. Sometimes it seems like a daunting task. What would you say to those in the audience who might be thinking: "Wow! Great for the Hosches, but I could never do that?"

Ben Hosch: I talk to people all the time about our future plans. The usual response I get is, "Well, good for you!" I don't know if people quite know how to respond to an aspiring missionary. I think they really want to say, "Are you insane?" But they're more polite than that. But I will say, it *IS* crazy. Somebody out there is saying "I could never do that!" And some days I wake up and say, "I can't do this!" Some days I wake up and say, "This is crazy!" Some days I wake up and ask, "How am I going to do this?" I can't do this unless the Holy Spirit is

fueling the fire. I can't do this unless God reminds me that he has called me and he will take care of all the things I cannot. You can't do this, I can't do this, but God can, and when he calls us to go, he'll do what needs to be done so that we can do this.

Dan Venberg: Sara, one final question. As we, the CLB, send you, we desire to support you as you take these steps of faith and are sent into a mission field that is full of uncertainty, yet a mission field that so needs the gospel. Besides the obvious financial support, is there anything specific that you would like to communicate to us as to how best we can support you in this calling as missionaries with the CLB?

Sara Hosch: Besides financially, the biggest way you can support us is through prayer and encouragement. We have been so blessed by the number of people who have come to us to tell us they are specifically praying for our family, or that have sent us emails/messages. We ask that you continue to pray for us, and send us encouraging words as we prepare to leave for Taiwan. Specific prayer requests right now would be for our visa to be approved, all the transitions and small/big moves we have coming up (especially for our kiddos). We have felt all your prayers, and are so thankful for the love we have been shown by the body of Christ.

On June 11, 2018, Rev. Ben and Sara Hosch were commissioned as the Church of the Lutheran Brethren's newest missionaries to the unreached Hakka people of Taiwan.



L to R: Dr. David Veum, Greg Rokos, Dr. Nathan Oldenkamp, Zachary Smith, Dr. Brad Pribbenow, Moriah Juhl, Dr. Daniel Berge, Bob Schultz, Dr. Eugene Boe, Jon Ronnevik, and Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen.

LBS Class of 2018



LUTHERAN BRETHERN SEMINARY

MORIAH JUHL

Moriah grew up on the mission field in Kenya with her parents, Rev. John and Tammy Juhl. She graduated from Juhl International Academy in 2011 and received a Bachelor's degree in history from the University of Jamestown, North Dakota in 2014. Prior to attending Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Moriah taught at Juba Christian Academy in Juba, South Sudan. Moriah

graduated with a Certificate of Theological Studies with an emphasis in Mission. In the coming year, she plans to continue working in Fergus Falls, Minnesota and in ministry at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy.

GREG ROKOS

Greg came to LB Seminary from Camrose, Alberta after having worked a variety of jobs including carpentry, campground management, and in various roles at the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute (CLBI). Greg is married to Dena and they have four children: Danyel (10), Garrick (8), Jesslyn (6), and Colby (8 months). Greg graduated from Ryley High School and earned

a diploma in Christian Ministry from CLBI in 2014. Greg graduated from LBS with a diploma in Christian Ministry. He has received a call to serve as Pastor of Outreach and Community Care at Resurrection Lutheran Brethren Church in Camrose, Alberta. He will start at the Rez on August 1.

“Lutheran Brethren Seminary serves the Church and the world by preparing servants of Christ for a life of ministry in God’s mission and for equipping his people to serve in his mission.”

LBS Mission Statement

JON RONNEVIK

Prior to coming to LBS, Jon worked eight years in construction management and another three years in full time youth-ministry. Jon graduated from Hillcrest Lutheran Academy in 2001, and from Liberty University in 2005 with a Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education. He graduates from LBS with a Master of Divinity degree. Jon and his wife Kristin have five boys: Micaiah (8), Gunnar (8), Leif (6), Haakon (4), Oskar (1.5). Jon has been serving since the summer of 2017 as pastor of Word of Life Church in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he will continue to serve.

BOB SCHULTZ

Robert “Bob” Schultz served as a Licensed Lay Minister of the gospel in Estevan, Saskatchewan for seven years before moving to Fergus Falls with his family in 2012 to formally begin studies at LBS. Bob is married to Melonie, and they have three children: Adrienne (21), Bob (19), and Paige (17). Bob finished grade 12 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and has completed two years of undergraduate studies (mostly through Minnesota State in Fergus Falls). He graduates with a Master of Divinity degree from LBS. Bob has accepted a call to serve as pastor at Inspiration Lutheran Brethren Church in Breckenridge, Minnesota. He begins his ministry there this summer.

ZACHARY SMITH

Zachary grew up in Menomonie, Wisconsin and attended Oak Ridge Lutheran Brethren Church. He was homeschooled through elementary and high school years, graduating in 2012. He then began online courses at Thomas Edison State College, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2014. In 2015, he moved to Fergus Falls and began studies at LBS. He graduates with a Master of Divinity degree. Zachary met his wife, Kari, in 2015 while working on the resident life staff at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy, and they were married in 2017. Zachary and Kari have moved to West Union, Iowa, where Zachary has accepted a call to serve as pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church.



Church planter Harold Rust addressing the 2018 graduates.



The 2018 graduating class of Lutheran Brethren Seminary.



Above: Jon Ronnevik receiving his colors.

Below: The class of 2018 recognized by those in attendance.



YOUTH

ROM 1:17

JULY 20-24, 2019

Lutheran Brethren Youth Convention | Estes Park, CO

Registration:

- Super Early Bird (Jan. 24th) \$365
- Early Bird (March 24th) \$400
- Final Registration (May 24th) \$430

YC19.org



Matt Schweitzer

Worship Speakers



Dave Veum



Troy Tysdal

Solberg Re-commissioned



Chaplain (Col) Ret. Michael Heuer officiated and led Chaplain Solberg in the Oath of Office.

Chaplain (Captain) Gregory Solberg was re-commissioned as an Active Duty Army Chaplain at Fort Drum, New York, on May 1, 2018.

Bigaouette Ordained



Rev. Ben Bigaouette being prayed over by the congregation of Oak Hill Lutheran Church.

On May 6, 2018, Ben Bigaouette was ordained at Oak Hill Church in Bloomington, Minnesota. Rev. Nick Mundis led the service.

Jensen Installed



L to R: Regional Pastor Phil Heiser, Elder Ken Lobe, Rev. Adam Jensen, Elders Mike Hays, Dan Strandly, and Jim Rice.

On May 20, 2018, Rev. Adam Jensen was installed as Senior Pastor at Maple Park Church in Lynnwood, WA. Regional Pastor Phil Heiser performed the installation.

Hartley Ordained



L to R: Regional Pastor Gary Witkop, Elders Warren Sundet, Lyle Kuester, Rev. Chris Hartley, Rev. Jason Lang, Elder Jon Maristuen, Rev. Ron Erickson.

On May 20, 2018, Chris Hartley was ordained at LB Fellowship Church in Williston, North Dakota. Regional Pastor Gary Witkop led the service.

Scragg Ordained



L to R: Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty, Pastor Paul Couch, Elder Ken Foreman, Rev. Andrew Foss, Rev. Fred Scragg (kneeling), Rev. Aage Larsen, Pastor Brian Edwards, Pastor Bert Crabbe, Elders Gordon Stedjan and Stan Wick.

On April 28, 2018, Fred Scragg was ordained at Bethel Lutheran Brethren Church in Huntington Station, New York. Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty led the service.

Kavlie Called Home

Rev. Hampton Kavlie, 88, entered eternal rest on May 29, 2018. Hampton was born January 29, 1930 in Bottineau, North Dakota. He graduated from Hillcrest Lutheran Academy in 1949, and was married to Ethel Schroeder on September 2, 1951. Following their marriage, they moved to Fergus Falls, where Hampton completed his education at the Lutheran Brethren Seminary in 1954. Hampton had a lengthy career in ministry, serving the communities of Osakis, MN; Grand Forks, ND; Sioux Falls, SD; Williston, ND; Minot, ND; and Phoenix, AZ. He retired in 2004 after 50 years in the ministry.



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BC18: King me!

The expression “King me!” is as worn as middle-aged memories of earlier days spent round a checker board. Yet, it is arresting and explosively current. Because, said this way, it is not the typical way in which we commonly use and hear the noun “king.” Here, “King me!” takes and twirls about something static; it flips the verbal board. “kingdom” no longer is a latent locale, and “King” cannot possibly be some dead guy. No, the expression “King me!” is infused with active verb-like force, movement, and expectancy. Someone is active, and radically so.

The converting of noun to verb, “King me!”, should be heard as a cry from abject humility, having somehow snaked along still alive through the pitfalls of the deadly game to this place, where there are no more moves nor possible wheeling about to further trudge dimly along. “King me!” now is not personal triumph, but an appeal and submission to Sovereign reign and mission. It is confession of need, and faith! “King me!” means not that now there is some other king lounging about the checkerboard. This is *all* about the reign and rule of the *only* King, and nothing so much about the peon.

In Christ, by faith—first at baptism, affirmed in growing conscious confession, communion-enlivened by the Lord’s Body, by the work of the Word daily dying and rising to repentance and faith—the Lord of the Church, Christ Jesus, is “kingdom-ing me.” As my friend, Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen, is fond of saying (paraphrased here), it is not so much that the Church has a mission and possesses God’s kingdom, but that God’s Mission has a Church and is possessed by his advancing kingdom.

Do you know what the checker pieces on the simple board game are called? I learned recently they are called *men* or sometimes *stones*. We are only ever men. There is only one King. But his reign arriving to us and through us has such retrofitted purpose and vigor for us stone-men! The game-changing prediction of Ezekiel comes to mind, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ...Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,’ declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘when I am proved holy through you before their eyes. ...I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees...’” (Ezekiel 36:22-23, 25-27).

Oh, yes! Do Lord, do Lord, do come and *Kingdom* me!

Rev. Paul Larson is President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

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