

Faith & Fellowship

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May/June 2018
Righteous



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— me —

CLB Biennial Convention 2018
June 9-12
Fergus Falls, Minnesota
www.CLBA.org/BC18

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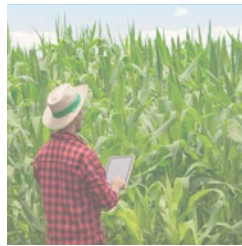
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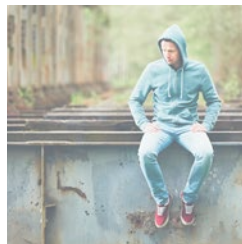
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Email prayer requests to: pray@clba.org

Useless?

H.E. WISLØFF



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Do you feel that you are useless? Your deepest desire is to be a blessing, to be a blessing to others. But all your attempts to reach this goal have failed. You feel that you are completely useless. Where you attempt to build, you seem to tear down. You hinder where you would help.

It is proper that we at times are troubled because of our uselessness. This will only drive a true disciple to his or her knees. And it is on our knees that we can become useful. God resists the proud. The self-willed and self-sufficient are useless in God's service.

God has chosen that which is nothing. God will fill the mind which is willing and obedient. If you are in God's

hand, you are always useful. He who calls you assumes the responsibility for his call. How often has he not turned the awkward into usefulness and by his grace changed thorns into roses?

But to be nothing is not the same as defeat and resignation. It is rather to be hid in Christ as a drop of water is lost in the sea. It is in him that we must live.

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.

I Need a Sign

TROY TYSDAL

I was raised in a Christian home, but somewhere along the way I left the Christian faith. I wanted proof of God's existence. I can remember asking him for a sign. I wanted him to rip open the sky, or at least give me a burning bush. Moses got a burning bush. He was in the desert. He saw fire. He heard the voice of God. I wanted that. I wanted proof.

After college I moved out of my parents' home. For the most part I was done with church. I was lost, and by lost, I mean doomed—headed toward hell. What does that look like, you might ask? It might look like your neighbor, your co-worker, your children, your parents. We all know people who don't know the Lord. We like to think that we don't. That everyone is right with God. But that is not the case. Jesus said, "Narrow is the gate and few will find it!" This means we all know people who won't be in heaven—people who are going to hell.

After several years of chasing the things of this world, I was left empty. Around that time, I began working for a company in sales, and it quickly became apparent that the owners were Christians. They weren't trying to cram Jesus down my throat, but they tried to live out their faith. That shouldn't have surprised me. That's how it's supposed to be! When we believe in Jesus, we are supposed to stand out. We are supposed to look different. Jesus calls his followers *light!*

This couple took that calling very seriously. They soon invited me to an introductory study on Christianity at their church. I declined. Having been raised in a church, I believed I knew all there was to know about Christianity. But they didn't give up. Six months later they invited me again. I thought to myself, "I have to go, because they are not going to give up until I do." So I went. I remember on the first night thinking, "I've heard all this before." I wanted to quit, and I would have, but my employers were there. Every week, they were there. You see,



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they were on a mission. I had asked God for a burning bush... and he sent me two Christians instead.

About the third or fourth week of the study I remember realizing that I didn't know all there was to know about Christianity. I didn't know all there was to know about Jesus. And I remember being really challenged by this Jesus I was being introduced to. This was not the Jesus I remembered from Sunday School. This Jesus was real. He understood the world. He wept. He got angry. He grew tired, hungry, thirsty. He was real!

After the final study I was disappointed that the course was over. It had become something important to me. That night I couldn't sleep, so I got up and opened my Bible. I read the words "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23-24). In that moment, I believed it was true—true about me and true about Jesus. I was saved. And by saved, I mean redeemed—headed for eternity in the paradise of God. I got on my knees, but I wasn't sure how to pray, so I simply said, "Thank you!"

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are *challenged* to be the *light* of the world, but it's more than a challenge. As Moses stood in front of the burning bush, God

said to him, "I've heard the cry of my people... and I'm going to do something... I'm going to send you" (see Exodus 3:7-10). God says the same thing to us today.

JOHN 20:21

Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

You might be thinking, "Who am I—that I should go?" That's the same question Moses asked. Hear God's reply: "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12). Now hear what Jesus says to us: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). But that was not enough for Moses. He pleaded with God, "I'm slow of speech and tongue... send someone else." But God reminded him who it was who created his tongue (Exodus 4:11).

You see, this is more than a *challenge*. It's who we are. It's what we do. It's what we were created to be. Believe, and become *light!* Because someone is looking for a burning bush. Someone is looking for a sign... and God is sending you.

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.

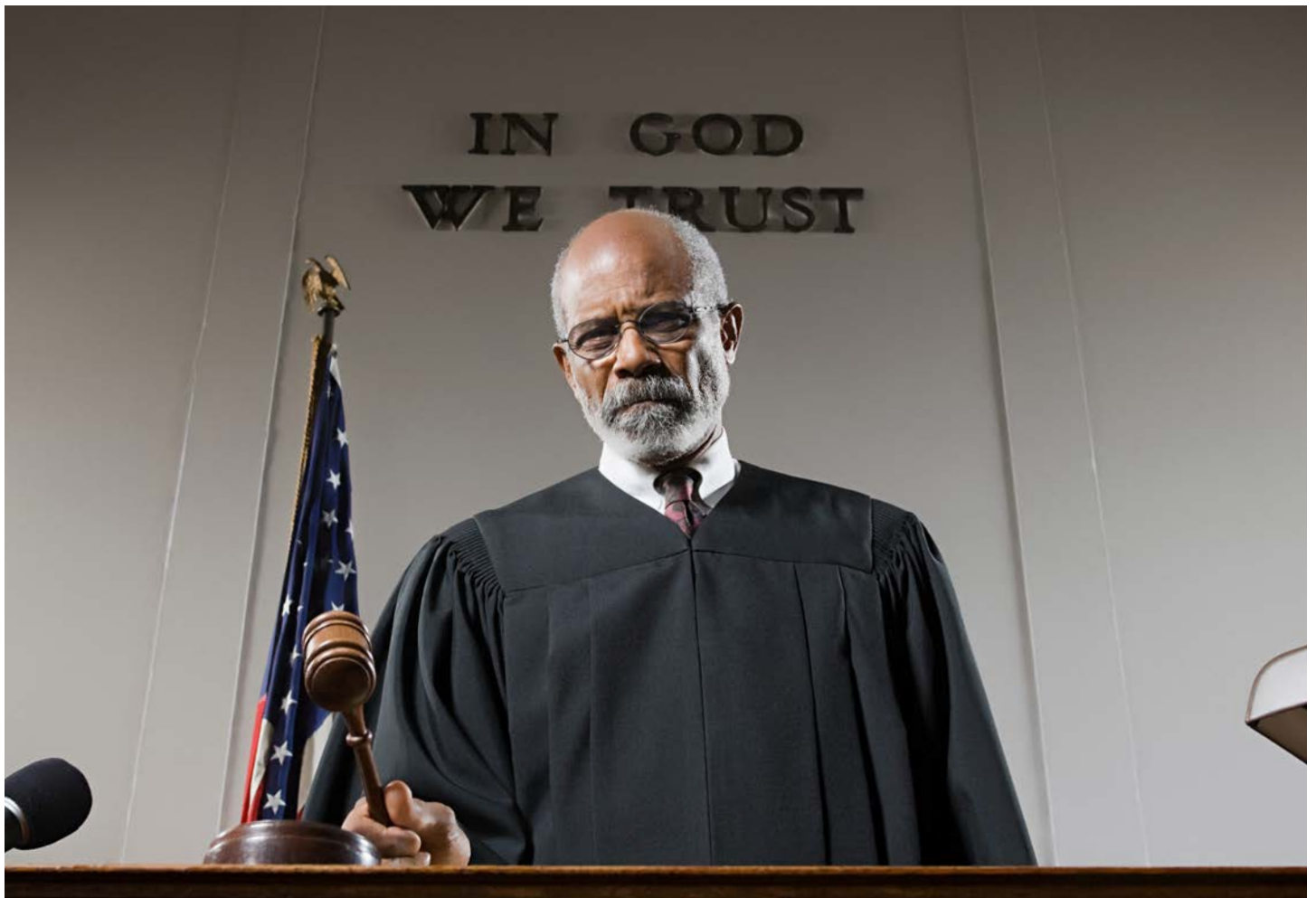


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Deserving Judgment

JOHN WILE

Flashing red light in the rear-view mirror. Speeding. Ticket. Twenty-one years old. Frontal lobe not fully developed. “I won’t pay the fine; I’ll talk my way out of it before the judge.” Intimidating court room, judge towering, “How do you plead?” Knees shaking, what a fool I am! Mouth opens, words can’t form, throat constricted. The judge speaking, “I can’t hear you.” Stumbling, embarrassed, escaping, paying the fine, thankful that the judge in kindness waives the extra fees. What was I thinking?

Almost fifty years later that’s still my only experience before a judge. But my palms still sweat. I can’t imagine that feeling magnified ten thousand times,

as it was for the prophet Isaiah, finding himself in the throne room of God, before the One whose robe filled the temple, flying Seraphim around him crying “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Foundations of the temple trembling, smoke billowing.

How is it that Isaiah could even voice the words, “Woe to me”? I’d have been a puddle. “Woe to me.” No kidding. “I am lost.” Definitely. “For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:1-5).

Isaiah knew full well that he was doomed—no right to be in the presence of God—deserving only of judgment. And yet, when moments later God says,

“I need someone to spread the message of my kingdom,” Isaiah jumps up and down like a grade-schooler whose teacher has just asked for a volunteer. “Me, me, I’ll do it, pick me!”

You know what happened. Between those two scenes is a third: One of those majestic Seraphim took tongs to grasp a burning coal from the altar, flew to Isaiah and touched his lips with it—those unclean lips, undeserving impure lips—and spoke life-giving words, “This burning coal has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away, your sin atoned for.”

Moments before, Isaiah trembled with fear; now he trembles with joy and excitement, “Me, me, I’ll do it, pick me!”

“Woe to me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’”

Isaiah 6:5

In the same spot where he dreaded the presence of God, he is now overwhelmed with excitement, joy and a readiness to do whatever he can for his Lord.

What happened? His guilt was taken away? Yes, but more than that. His sin was atoned for? Yes, but more than that. Forgiveness and atonement were not the goal, they were the grace-filled means by which God accomplished his greatest work—to restore Isaiah to an unhindered, mutually enjoyed, soul-to-soul relationship with his God.

Peter walked Isaiah’s path. He saw the majesty of Jesus in an overwhelming catch (Luke 5) and, falling face down in the boat among the wiggling flopping fish, he cried, “Go away, I’m a sinful man.” The long-suffering woman—she too walked Isaiah’s path (Matthew 9). “I’ll just touch Jesus’ robe, I dare not let him see me. I’ll just reach through the crowd, just a touch...”

In the bottom of that boat Peter could only see his guilt, but what did he hear? Jesus’ words. “Don’t be afraid, from now on you’ll travel with me. You’ll be one of my three closest friends and you’ll turn the world upside down as you bring so many into my kingdom.” Friend of the amazing One? One of his three closest? Inconceivable, yet exactly what happened.

In the pressing crowd, the long-suffering woman, well aware that she deserved nothing, but what did she hear? Jesus’ words, “Daughter, be encouraged, your faith has made you well, healed you,

saved you.” Daughter? Daughter? Such an intimate endearing word? For me? Yes, for you.

Isaiah, Peter, the woman—when they encountered the Lord and received his forgiveness and were restored into his friendship, none of them knew what the burning coal actually was. But they would come to see it, at least glimpses of it. Isaiah would write, “The punishment that brought us peace was on him” (53:5). Peter (and probably the woman too) would live to see Jesus crucified, the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. Jesus, the burning coal.

It is right for us to see an unquenchable smile breaking across the face of that long-suffering woman as she realizes that she has not only been healed from her affliction, but has been welcomed into Jesus’ friendship. It is right for us to see Peter standing up straight in that fish-packed boat and embracing a journey that would lead him one day to be again speechless, but overjoyed, invited into the company of Moses and Elijah and the Son of God. And it’s right for us to see the remarkable, dramatic transformation of Isaiah as he stood before the Holy, Holy, Holy One and found his words changing from “Woe, there is no hope for me” to “Me, me, I’ll do it, pick me.”

And, of course, this is our path too. We see the burning coal clearer now. We see Jesus, the Lamb of God, our Savior. We see him who became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God—and in so doing—be restored to

that same relationship of Isaiah and Peter and the unnamed woman. We too hear the words of family endearment, “Jesus is not ashamed to call [us] brothers and sisters” (Hebrews 2:11). We too have an unbreakable smile on our hearts. We too journey with him into eternity.

Now, back in that throne room, standing beside Isaiah, as we see the robe filling the temple, thresholds trembling, smoke billowing and Seraphim crying “Holy, Holy, Holy,” we need not feel a shred of woe, no fear of being discovered, no need to send ourselves away. For this God has welcomed us. And we now lift our eyes to his majesty. And right there in that throne room, we too jump up and down with Isaiah, delighted and unhindered in spirit saying, “That’s my Friend, that’s my Brother, that’s my Lord, that’s my God.”



Rev. John Wile spent his first fifteen years of ministry serving congregations in North America. He and his wife Kathryn served Lutheran Brethren International Mission as a pastoral care team to missionaries for over twenty years, while they ministered to global servants through Barnabas International in Asia, Africa, and South America. They currently reside in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



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Righteous in Christ

KEVIN SKARET

The prisoners stand with their hands bound behind their backs in the center of the only light, from an unseen source, in an otherwise dark room. The prosecutor paces back and forth listing off the charges, “Evil, thoughtless violence, wonton destruction, hatred, putting children in danger, treason, sedition, seeking power and control at all costs.”

What follows is perhaps the most haunting and, for me, memorable scene from Richard Donner’s 1978 film *Superman*. The prosecutor, played by Marlon Brando, looks to the council, portrayed as projections of very large heads, as they each shout the word, “Guilty!” This word is repeated several times as it echoes and reverberates

through the room with ominous-sounding music and eerie sound effects in the background.

This iconic scene served to create a back story for the villains in the sequel. For me, it provides a visual for how I perceived the judgment of God as a young child. I would picture the bright light from an unseen source way above me, shining down, revealing everything. The prosecutor paces as he lists off everything I have done wrong, and echoing voices repeat the verdict over and over, “Guilty!” While this imagery faded as I grew older, the echoing voices returned every time I did something wrong.

Can you relate to this? Do those inner voices call you guilty? How do you respond to them?

My responses over the years ranged from “just live a holy life, stop messing up” to “it doesn’t matter what you do because God will forgive you.” On the one hand I was trying to live a perfect life on my own effort, and on the other hand I was excusing my sin and bad behavior as if it didn’t matter, pretending I wasn’t guilty.

In the first approach, I kept failing to do everything perfectly and would hear the voices, “Guilty!” In the second, I kept trying to tell myself that I was not guilty, but in the quietness of my heart the voices still sounded: “Guilty!”

The voices remained in both cases because, in truth, I *was* guilty. No matter how much I tried to do right or tried to deny my guilt, the guilt remained. And so

“Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith.”

Philippians 3:8-9, CSB

did the echoing voices—“Guilty, guilty, guilty.”

Cut me some slack. That movie was a long time ago. I was young and naïve in my understanding of the gospel, after all. But the trouble is, the waffling between legalistically following rules and trying to excuse myself for sinful choices by saying I am not guilty—this remains even for an adult who follows Christ. I believe that if we are honest, we all struggle with this.

Maybe we have come to the point where we know and can say with confidence, “Salvation is all the work of God and there is nothing I can do to make myself right. I am totally dependent on the finished work of Jesus Christ, who alone can bridge the chasm between sinners and the holy God. There is nothing I can do.” Yet we may still live and behave as though we are trying to work—earn our way through obedience—into God’s graces, or else excuse our sin, saying, “I’m only human; nobody’s perfect.”

When people are brought before the court and accused of a crime, they plead guilty or not guilty. As the trial concludes, they will be declared guilty or not guilty. In the courtroom scene in the *Superman* movie, the prosecutor begins his statement by telling the council that the accusations are not “fantasy or made up” and finally urges that they “have to rule against them for the egregious charges.” Like the criminals in the movie, we *are* guilty—no matter how much we try to behave rightly, no matter how much we

declare ourselves not guilty. It is into this ugly reality that the truth of the gospel must come.

The courtroom imagery is useful in describing Christ taking my punishment for me. However, Jesus did much more than allowing the Judge of all the earth to set me free from my guilt. Jesus also lived the perfect life you and I could never live, and credits believers with his own righteousness.

In Christ, I am made right with God because Jesus took the just punishment for my sins in my place. God sees me through Jesus and he credits me with the righteousness of Christ. “Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith” (Philippians 3:8-9, CSB). “All things” has to include my effort to follow the law. I must consider all things “as dung” and trust only in Christ who was punished for my sin and died that I might be justified before God.

The Superman courtroom scene highlights that dark and overbearing picture we so often live under of God as judge. We can trust in Christ for salvation, while continuing to picture God standing over us like some giant projected head shouting, “Guilty!” Of course, we desire to live holy lives, but we so quickly forget that our holiness is only through Christ living in us—not by our continued

legalistic striving to be justified or our pretending to be not guilty.

No, our right standing with God is found only in Christ. The apostle Paul says it perfectly: “He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21, CSB).



Rev. Kevin Skaret serves as pastor of Hope Lutheran Brethren Church in Barnesville, Minnesota.

The Harvest is Ready

SARA HOSCH



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I have grown up in the church all my life. Thinking of my conversion, rather than pinpointing a single moment, I can see it came through the planting of seeds by many workers. Workers who took time to invest in my life, to hear my story, to encourage and teach me, and sometimes rebuke me. They shared Jesus with me in an intentional and real way, and the seeds they planted took root and grew into a tree bearing fruit. There are more seeds to be planted. The harvest is great.

It's Taiwan, it's Chad, it's the East Coast, West Coast, Midwest. It's your backyard, your neighborhood. But the workers are few. The concept of *missions* is often compartmentalized. We think cross-cultural, across the ocean, bilingual. However, what about the people next door? Do they know Jesus? When is the last time you invited your neighbor in to share a meal? When is the last time you asked your coworker to share their story? As Christians, many of us have this idea that missions is this grand gesture of moving across the world... when maybe, it's as simple as befriending the check-out lady you say hello to at the grocery store every week.

People want to be known. We all have a deep desire to be loved and to be in a genuine relationship with others. Jesus was an expert at relationships. He had

a heart for serving others. We can read about his constant ministry in the New Testament—how he healed, fed, shared stories, listened to, wept with people, and even washed the feet of his disciples. He took time to invest in the lives of his followers, and spoke boldly about his Father. He knew this life was temporary, and looked to the eternal kingdom in heaven. He left us a great example, but not an easy task.

Jesus never said being his follower would be easy. “And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). Jesus asks his followers to drop what they are doing and follow him, no matter the cost. As they were called, some disciples dropped their day's catch of fish, others gave up worldly riches and lifestyles, some left family behind. Each follower makes a sacrifice, because we know what Jesus has done for us. And why wouldn't we want to share his good news?

When we stop to think about Jesus' ministry, and the way he trained his disciples, it gives us a better idea of what missions should look like. We are all part of the body of Christ. And we all have been given different gifts; some in teaching, some in encouragement, some in faith, some in wisdom... the list goes on. As gifted people, we are the individual parts that make up one body. Each part of

the body is important and indispensable, no matter how small (1 Corinthians 12).

Where do your gifts lie? How are you using your gifts for the Kingdom of God? Maybe your gift is encouragement. Take a look around you. Who are the people around you who are suffering and need to hear about Jesus? Perhaps it's a young mom who is feeling isolated and battling with depression. Or possibly it's a teenager who is struggling with making real relationships in a generation of social media. Maybe it's the elderly lady down the street who just lost her driver's license, and could use some company. Maybe it's the man who always seems to have a smile, but—unknown to you—is struggling through a failing marriage. We are so busy that we forget to take time for others. Jesus always took time for people. Yes, he took time away to rest. But he was intentional. He had compassion for the lost and the suffering.

What if we lived like this? What if the next time we saw a homeless man on the corner, instead of avoiding or judging him, we brought him to a café and took time to listen? Isn't that what Jesus' ministry was all about? Taking time to listen to others? Realizing that our world is always going to be busy, but that it is only temporary? Looking towards eternity and being so excited we can't help but share the good news we have found in Jesus?



So, workers, are you ready? God has called each of us to share his Good News, and he promises to go with us. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). What greater news do we have than this? The harvest is ready. Jesus has already prepared it for us. He is calling us to go out into our neighborhoods. Whether it be the United States, Canada, Japan, Chad, Taiwan—wherever we are, there is a harvest! There are people waiting to hear the Good News, people waiting to be listened to and loved. They need Jesus as much as we do.

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:37-38).

Sara Hosch and her husband, Rev. Ben Hosch, are LBIM missionary candidates to the Hakka people of Taiwan.



International Mission

Reaching the Unreached

It is with joy and anticipation that we are ready to call and send the Hosch family to ministry in Taiwan. Rev. Ben Hosch is a 2016 graduate of Lutheran Brethren Seminary. He and his wife Sara share a passion for

ministry among the Hakka people. Lord willing, in October 2018, the Hosch family will join our team in Taiwan as Christ’s representatives to this unreached people group.

To Support Lutheran Brethren International Mission:

www.LBIM.org

Pentecost

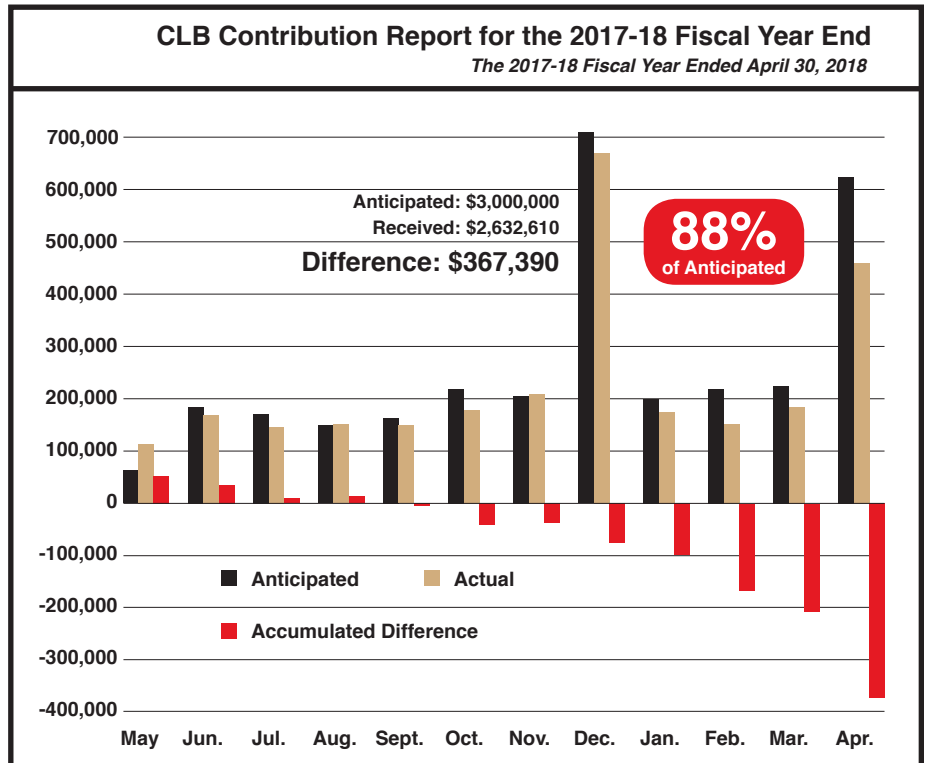
ROY HEGGLAND

Pentecost is the day we celebrate the sending of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers. He came on the fiftieth day following the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The eternal Spirit of God has been present in the world since creation. In Genesis, we read that “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (1:2) and we hear God say, “Let US make mankind in OUR image, in OUR likeness” (1:26). In the Old Testament we read how God’s Spirit also came upon people like Samson, Elijah, and Elisha to empower them for special deeds and for the leading of God’s people. The Feast of Pentecost (Shavuot, or Feast of Weeks) was and still is celebrated by the Jewish people in remembrance of God giving the Law through Moses on Mt. Sinai. They believed this occurred about seven weeks after the slaying of the Passover Lamb and the departure from Egypt. Not coincidentally, God chose the celebration of Pentecost, about seven weeks after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, to send his Holy Spirit to personally live within each believer in Jesus Christ.

Israel’s Old Testament celebration of Pentecost was clearly looking forward to its fulfillment in the new celebration of Pentecost. On that first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus, God would transform the Feast commemorating the giving of the Law into the Feast celebrating the giving of the Holy Spirit!

In the time of Nehemiah, a remnant of the Jewish nation was permitted to return from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild and resettle the city from which—as God’s judgment on their sin—they had been taken 70 years before. Listen to what the people prayed to God on that occasion:

“...Our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. They refused to obey and were not



mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them... The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go. *You gave your good Spirit to instruct them* and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing...” (Nehemiah 9:16-21, ESV).

Just as God sustained the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years and

they lacked nothing, so the Holy Spirit sustains us while we await that glorious entry into the eternal Promised Land... and we lack nothing. And, just as God had mercy and grace on the Israelites, so God has mercy and gives grace for those who repent and look to Jesus as their only source of life and hope, for this life and the life to come.

May our hope of the resurrection and the life to come fill us with compassion for those who have no hope. May we speak the gospel to our neighbors at every opportunity. May we give our gifts generously so that the gospel can be brought to those in our dying world who have never heard this Good News.

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



Thy Kingdom Come...

WOMEN'S EVENT & LUNCHEON 2018

Emperors, dictators, kings and heads of state have ruled over powerful nations, rising and falling throughout time. God's Kingdom is not of this world, Jesus said, and yet he profoundly impacted every life he touched. His Kingdom still stands! Through many centuries, citizens of this Kingdom, believers in this eternal King, have also impacted individuals and communities their lives have touched. Today, we too, pray for his Kingdom to come to us, and through us.

On Saturday, June 9, 2018, 9:15 am – 4 pm, at Bethel LBC, Fergus Falls, Minnesota: Women of the CLB will unite to praise this Eternal King!

Ruth Vallevik and Gretchen Ronnevik, morning presenters, will lead us in two aspects of the theme:

Thy Kingdom Come...through

your Word to us: Focusing on praise to our King, Ruth Vallevik (Director of Women's Ministries of the CLB), explores the questions, "What does the 'Kingdom of God' really mean, and how does a believer in Christ live as a child of the Kingdom?"

Thy Kingdom Come...through us

to the world: Focusing on Inter-Generational Women's Ministry, Gretchen Ronnevik (farm wife, homeschool mom, blogger and knitting designer), shares a gospel-centered approach to mentoring, and how Law and Gospel changes how we interact with younger generations.

Missionary greetings, including a "Surprise Guest" from overseas, and an introduction to "Vision 2020" will continue to show us God's Kingdom. Kingdom-bonding during our luncheon will be followed by ministry updates, strategic planning for our part in the Kingdom, and two afternoon workshop blocks for practical equipping:



Women's Event & Luncheon 2018: "Thy Kingdom Come..."

1. Revitalize! A Fresh Approach to Women's Ministry by Jeri Nellemoe, Moorhead, Minnesota

God's truth never changes, but sometimes our ministry style needs a makeover! Jeri, Women's Ministry Director at Triumph LBC, shares how new ideas are helping to revitalize ministry to women.

2. Gospel Mentoring by Gretchen Ronnevik, Fergus Falls, Minnesota

Gretchen will expand on how the Bible lays out an inter-generational relationship, powered by God, not us; as part of the design of the church, not a side program. How can we teach younger women in a way that won't just change their own lives, but the lives of those in their families and communities?

3. Japanese Ministries: an Outreach Model by Sue Olson, Seattle, Washington

God has given each of us life experiences for the purpose of connecting with people in the place we are now. Who might you connect with and how? Sue, Pacific Region North Women's Ministries President

and Japanese Ministry leader with her husband, Roger, will tell us how God is using Japanese Ministries in Seattle to share the gospel with those who have never heard.

4. Bible Study...or Book Club?? by Barbara Hegglund, Cape Coral, Florida

"Women in the Word Together" is one of our main goals. Barbara, Women's Ministries National Chairman, will share how we can be discerning as we choose and use material for our small group studies, in a world full of so many choices.

Pray for God to work in and through us, during this first "Day of Equipping" of the 2018 CLB Biennial Convention! Register for this Women's Event (\$25 includes luncheon and free nursery through age 3) by May 25 at www.clba.org/bc18-registration/ or use the registration blanks sent to your local church.

Cheryl Olsen is the Faith & Fellowship correspondent for Women's Ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



Visit: www.WMCLB.com



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A Disciple-Making Movement

STAN OLSEN

The concept of Arrow Corps started a couple years ago. As the CLB Mission Team worked through a strategic planning process, we recognized two significant needs in our denomination: 1) We have many churches that are in plateau or decline and 2) we do not have any denomination-sponsored ministry opportunities designed especially for either young adults or active retirees. Considering both needs at once, a picture began to emerge for addressing both of them.

We recognized that most of our congregations in plateau or decline have been unable to make the changes that

might enable them to experience greater health and growth. These necessary changes would not likely occur apart from “changing the DNA”—the culture of the church. But such a transformation would most likely require the local presence of a group of people who were modeling and incarnating the needed changes.

That’s when the idea “clicked” of a team of people joining into the life of the congregation. And what if this team was large enough to provide support and fellowship for the team members, while making an impact on the receiving congregation? And what if this team included older adults to provide

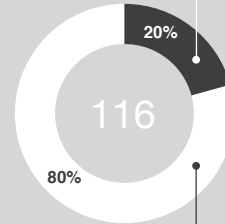
mentorship and stability for the young adults? And what if this team were in place for a longer time—two years—to insure the needed changes would be effectively integrated into the congregation? These questions shaped the now-developing ministry called Arrow Corps.

Let’s consider the name of this developing ministry first. The dictionary defines the word *corps* as “a group of persons associated or acting together,” such as the diplomatic corps, the press corps, or the American Peace Corps. The word *corps* captures the essence of the teams that we will be sending out, especially the “together” part.

Arrow Corps

Arrow Corps is a CLB mission initiative designed to help congregations engage their communities in mission for the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is designed for church plants in their formative years or for churches in plateau or decline. *Arrow Corps* teams will consist of 8 to 12 young adults and active retirees trained in outreach and evangelism. Each team will serve its assigned congregation as a partner in revitalization and as missionaries to the community.

Congregations Growing



Plateau or Decline

In this concept of teams primarily composed of young adults, we noted similarities between today's generation of young adults and that generation who first joined the Peace Corps. Both generations are activist; both desire to make a difference and change the world; both are willing to act, not just talk. When the Peace Corps began, thousands upon thousands of young adults dedicated two years of their lives to spread goodwill around the world.

We're now asking this generation of CLB young adults to dedicate themselves to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ by making disciples as they go to the churches and communities to which they will be sent. It's a bit like the CLB version of the Peace Corps, only the peace that *Arrow Corps* will be spreading is eternal peace with God. The "Arrow" part of the name? It communicates movement, direction and purpose—hitting the target. These teams will be purposeful with a clear direction.

Next let's consider the composition and size of these teams. They will be primarily composed of young adults with some older adults (possibly active retirees). These teams will be larger than teams sent out by the CLB in the past. The goal is 8-12 people, because a larger team will have a better chance of impacting the DNA of the churches where they are based. A larger team will also provide the support and fellowship the team members need in this crucial,

but difficult ministry. The intention is for a two-year term of service for team members, with a minimum commitment of one year. Their main ministry will be to make disciples, who then go on to make disciples of others... Making disciples is the process of building relationships with people who are not Christians to help them understand their need of a Savior so that they will receive Christ and then begin to live and grow in him. To accomplish this, the teams will engage in both the congregation and the local community.

The bar for team members is set very high. They are being asked to support themselves with part-time jobs and secure their own lodging, while they engage in the community to make disciples, while they also help the church to engage in making disciples. After an initial training period, each team will receive continuing training and support throughout their ministry time. To serve in this way, *Arrow Corps* clearly has to be a definite calling from the Lord.

Churches requesting and receiving *Arrow Corps* teams will be thoroughly vetted. When churches plateau or decline, it is often due to losing touch with their local community and becoming very inward-focused. So churches hosting *Arrow Corps* will need to embrace change, learn how to reach out to their communities, and enter into disciple-making relationships with people outside of their congregation. They will not be

passive recipients of *Arrow Corps* teams, but will be called to personal engagement in evangelism, outreach and disciple-making—through the encouragement and coaching of *Arrow Corps* team members.

We see this developing ministry as essential to the health of CLB churches in plateau or decline, and as such, to the overall health of our denomination. *Arrow Corps* is in the initial stages of development, with systems and structure being built as you read this. We're dependent on the Lord to provide all that is needed, so we are asking for your support.

Please pray first that the Lord would raise up team members. Pray for the people and resources for this ministry to come together. We welcome your help in discovering the young and older adults that God is calling to serve him and his Church in this way. You may know of someone God may be calling to serve in *Arrow Corps*—someone in your church, a child or grandchild, or maybe even you, yourself.

May God be glorified and may his kingdom be enlarged as the *Arrow Corps* teams are sent out to engage with our churches in making new disciples of Jesus.

Rev. Stan Olsen is Regional Pastor for the Central Region of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

For more information contact Rev. Stan Olsen: solsen@CLBA.org



Photo: LWF/C. Kästner

Rev Robert Goyek Daga, in front of the millennium Cathedral that his Church is building in the center of Garoua town.

Diakonia and Dialogue for Peace

AN UPDATE FROM CAMEROON

Members of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon live under the threat of Boko Haram terror. The militia targets churches and pastors. Church president Rev. Robert Goyek Daga works for peace by seeking dialogue with moderate Muslim leaders in the area.

When Rev. Robert Goyek Daga goes to see one of his congregations, he moves in areas which have been declared off-limits for foreigners. He is not safe when he travels there. The Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon, which Daga leads,

has congregations in the “extreme North” of the country, an area heavily affected by Boko Haram terrorism.

Cameroon borders Nigeria in the Northwest and Chad in the Northeast. Both Chad and Cameroon are fighting the Boko Haram militia in Nigeria with open warfare. The entire Lake Chad region, as well as the villages in the Nigeria-Cameroon border area suffer from terrorist attacks aimed at Christians and moderate Muslims, as well as foreigners.

“The Boko Haram terrorism affects us a lot. We lose our members, we lose places

of worship, fields, and livestock,” Daga says, recalling killings and abductions of his pastors which have happened over the past years. The case of Pastor Jean-Marcel Kesvere made headlines in 2014, when the father of eight children was abducted in a Boko Haram raid on his hometown Bagaram.

The church is now supporting his family—like many others who lost their homes and farms fleeing the militia’s terror. More than 100,000 people have been internally displaced from the villages along the border into the bigger

CLB Cameroon



"THERE ARE MANY PARTS, BUT ONE BODY." 1 Corinthians 12:20

Pioneer CLB missionaries arrived in Cameroon in 1920. By God's grace, churches were planted among animistic people groups. The Cameroonian church is now quite large with an average

attendance of 121,494 each Sunday. The national church has matured and become independent of support from LBIM. They even send cross-cultural missionaries to spread the gospel in the country of Mali.

For more information contact: lbim@CLBA.org

cities, to be safe from the Islamist terror. "It is the worst for the elderly, who cannot run. We receive them in our churches and schools and offer assistance," Daga says. "We have a lot of displaced people. This is the reality of our hard life in the extreme North."

The church's resources have diminished since the Boko Haram crisis began in 2013. Many church members have lost their homes and their livelihoods. Before, they were farmers or fishermen in the Lake Chad region. When Boko Haram attacked their towns, they fled to cities further South, leaving their source of income behind.

The political crisis is accompanied by natural disaster. Like all countries in Central Africa, Cameroon has a dry season and a rainy season, but the changing climate has turned this natural cycle to extremes. "Every five years, there is a catastrophe," Daga says. "The rivers are empty, the animals die and the people suffer. Later the rains come very violently and the floods destroy everything."

Diakonia and humanitarian assistance have thus become a primary focus for

the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon, which has its own department for development, comprised of 16 staff in the head office and a further 1,200 in the field. The staff train congregations in agriculture and how to deal with refugees and IDPs [internally displaced people]—beyond their own members. "We must do our best to create sustainable agriculture and livestock farming, to feed our people," Daga says. "Each year, we reach more than 12,000 people in need directly."

He himself has started a dialogue with his Muslim counterparts. A local committee of 15 members of religious and young leaders has been set up to sensitize the population for peaceful cohabitation and to promote dialogue between the different religious communities.

"Boko Haram claim they are the true Islam, but they are nothing but violent extremists," Daga says. Together with like-minded faith leaders in the mosques in Garoua, Maroua, and Mora, he is working on a project to use education against the terror of a group whose name literally means "Books are sinful."

Daga sees the hope for peace and security in this cooperation. "In the beginning, we were afraid," he says. "But now we have a very good relationship with our neighbors. The pastors, the imams, the marabouts (traditional healers), the traditional leaders, and the local authorities, we are all together. We all hope that we will be able to live in peace."

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a global communion of national and regional Lutheran churches headquartered in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland.

Sources

This story was originally published by Lutheran World. org on February 6, 2018, and is reproduced with permission of LWF Communications. [<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/diakonia-and-dialogue-peace>]



gradyreese/Stock

Take an Interest

MARK JOHANNESSEN

invite you to consider the following hypothetical stories:

Picture Cory: a 14-year-old freshman in high school. He seems to be your typical suburbanite student, he plays on the JV football team, has solid grades, goes to church most Sundays and regularly goes to youth group. What most people don't know about Cory is that he struggles with depression. His parents turned in multiple directions for help, including seeking the help of their pastor. Upon the suggestion of their pastor, Cory was introduced to a retired English teacher named Jerry. Jerry and Cory became friends, and—meeting once a week for over a year—Jerry was able to share with Cory some of his own struggles with depression. While Jerry couldn't "fix" Cory's struggles, he was

able to be the friend who understood what Cory was going through.

Picture Sidney: a 16-year-old from a small rural town. Last week Sidney's parents sat down with her and told her that their separation would become permanent. They had decided to proceed with a divorce. Sidney was devastated at this news. Later that week, Sidney attended her youth group. Following the teaching time, the students went off to their usual small groups. In Sidney's small group, the leader asked the group if anyone had any personal updates to share. Sidney spoke up, sharing the news of her parents' pending divorce. The small group leader wisely led the rest of the group to pray for Sidney and her family. After the other students had gone,

the leader shared with Sidney that her own parents had divorced when she was in high school. In the following months, the group leader made special effort to hear from Sidney every week.

Picture Jeremy: a 12-year-old from a very tough urban neighborhood. His older brother joined a gang when Jeremy was only eight, and was now in the middle of an 18-month sentence for dealing drugs. Jeremy's dad hadn't been seen in five years. It seemed everything was working against Jeremy. Jeremy was at a crossroad in life—contemplating looking for belonging in the same way that his brother had. Would he or wouldn't he follow his brother? One day Jeremy passed by an old store front and saw some kids from school shooting pool

BC18 JUNE 9 SATURDAY DAY of EQUIPPING

Register at: www.CLBA.org/BC18

During the 2018 Biennial Convention, the Church of the Lutheran Brethren is blessed to have Rev. Mark Matlock offer a youth ministry track for youth ministry leaders and congregations who would like to improve their youth ministry program. Mark is the founder of WisdomWorks LLC—a company dedicated to helping organizations craft workshops to help leadership reach and generate solutions.

Youth Ministry Track

Rev. Mark Matlock

Founder of WisdomWorks LLC
Flower Mound, TX



Mark is an author, ordained minister, and youth pastor. He has been working with youth pastors, students, and parents for more than two decades, providing leadership for programs and training events. He is the coauthor of *Dirty Faith* and the author of *Freshman: The College Student's Guide to Developing Wisdom*.

and playing ping pong. As Jeremy took a second glance he recognized a couple of kids. They saw him and invited him in. Inside he met Steve, the youth director of “The Bridge.” Steve invited Jeremy to come as often as possible and Jeremy did just that. In the course of going to “The Bridge” several times each week, Jeremy developed a friendship with Steve. In addition to providing the wisdom that Jeremy sought, Steve repeatedly told Jeremy about Jesus and also invited him to come with him to church. Over the course of many months, Jeremy came to believe in Jesus and was baptized. He became connected to Steve’s church. Twelve years later Jeremy went on to seminary and is now serving as a youth pastor with a passion to reach out to at-risk teens.

What’s the common tie between these stories?

Three different adults took a concerned interest in these students. Each of these adults played an irreplaceable role in these impressionable teen’s lives and, because of that, their future lives were changed by the love of Christ.

When you see teens at the mall, at your church, in the park or during your hometown high school football game, do they scare you? Do they intimidate you? Does the world that they live in seem so far away from yours?

Any of us might think that way. But as you peel off the layers of their stories, you will find that their experiences are more similar to ours than we might expect.

I encourage you not to stand in the shadows. Rather, find ways to get involved with the lives of this next generation. Perhaps it will be in a formal role as a coach or small group leader, or as a mentor. Or perhaps it will just be making small talk with them while you’re waiting in line. Perhaps being a prayer warrior for them. As you hear their stories, you will find yourself relating to many of their life experiences.

Fuller Youth Institute has done extensive research on retaining students in the life of the church beyond their high school years. One of the most significant factors: teens need to have intergenerational relationships in their churches. We might think that reaching students is about hip, flashy, age-appropriate programs, but that’s not the case. What students most need are people in their lives who care for them and pray for them!

Hear the Scripture’s encouragement to older believers to look after those who are younger: “Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to

much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:2-8a).



Rev. Mark Johannesen is the Youth Ministry Coordinator for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren and serves as Pastor to Students & Their Families at Triumph Lutheran Brethren Church in Moorhead, Minnesota and West Fargo, North Dakota.



KING me BC18

CLB BIENNIAL CONVENTION

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, indwelt by his Spirit—*advancing* his kingdom to create disciples for his glory.

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Saturday Evening, June 9:
Kingdom Secrets

Rev. Ed Nugent

Our Redeemer's LBC
Minot, North Dakota



Rev. Ed Nugent serves as the Preaching and Teaching Pastor at Our Redeemer's LBC in Minot, ND. He has also served congregations in Fergus Falls and Le Sueur, MN.

Sunday Morning, June 10:
The Glorious Engrained
in the Small

Pres. Paul Larson

Church of the
Lutheran Brethren
Fergus Falls, Minnesota



Rev. Paul Larson is President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. He has served as pastor at congregations in Fort Collins, CO; Fullerton, CA and Eau Claire, WI.

Monday Morning, June 11:
The Weedy Truth

CH (Col) Ret. Mike Heuer

United States Air Force
Annapolis, Maryland



Chaplain Michael Heuer has been an ordained LB pastor since 1989. He recently retired as a Colonel in the U.S. Air Force Chaplain Corps. He holds a Ph.D. in Religion and is currently an Adjunct Professor for Denver Seminary.

Monday Evening, June 11:
The Price of the Pearl

Rev. Vern Baardson

Triumph LBC
West Fargo, North Dakota



Rev. Vern Baardson serves as Congregational Life Pastor at Triumph West in West Fargo, ND. In addition he serves as a Police Chaplain for the West Fargo Police Department.

Tuesday Morning, June 12:
The Day of the Dragnet

Rev. Roger Viksnes

Bethany LBC
East Hartland, Connecticut



Rev. Roger Viksnes was baptized and raised in the faith at Bethany Lutheran Brethren Church in East Hartland, CT where he now serves as Lead Pastor. He has also served congregations in Breckenridge, MN and Brooklyn, NY.

Larson Ordained



L to R: Rhys, Sarah, Caleb, and Kaylen Larson (Not Pictured: Elyana Larson)

On January 13, 2018, Caleb Larson was ordained at LB Homes in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. Regional Pastor Stan Olsen led the service.

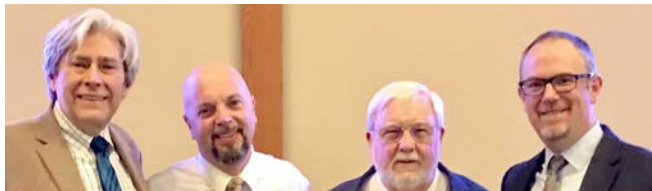
Knutson Ordained



L to R: Regional Pastor Roger Olson, Rev. Clinton Knutson, Elders Art Barth and Gordon Cochran.

On February 11, 2018, Clinton Knutson was ordained at Birch Hills Community Church in Birch Hills, Saskatchewan. Regional Pastor Roger Olson led the service.

Schweitzer Installed



L to R: Elder Les Dullnig, Rev. George Schweitzer, Elder Ron Fletcher, and Regional Pastor Phil Heiser.

On January 14, 2018, Rev. George Schweitzer was installed as pastor of Good Shepherd Ministries in Buda, Texas. Regional Pastor Phil Heiser performed the installation.

LWF Elders Ordained



L to R: Rev. Tim Voth, Rev. Bruce Stumbo, Elder Adam Canfield, Elder Mark Billings, and Regional Pastor Gary Witkop.

On March 18, 2018, Adam Canfield and Mark Billings were ordained as elders at Living Word Fellowship in Dickinson, North Dakota. Regional Pastor Gary Witkop led the service.

Jonas Ordained as Elder

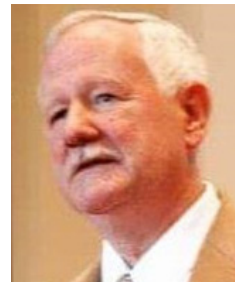


L to R: Elder Nate Dahl, Rev. Ryan Nordlund, Elder Rick Thompson, Elder Rod Jonas, Regional Pastor Gary Witkop, Elder in training Brent Wilmeth, and Rev. Keith Wolderich.

On March 11, 2018, Rod Jonas was ordained as an elder at Grace Lutheran Brethren Church in Bismarck, North Dakota. Regional Pastor Gary Witkop led the service.

Narvesen Called Home

Rev. Kenneth Narvesen was born on February 12, 1951, in Staten Island, New York. He went home to the Lord on March 23, 2018. Rev. Narvesen graduated from Taylor University in Upland, Indiana in 1973 and Lutheran Brethren Seminary in Fergus Falls, Minnesota in 1976. He married Jayne Kruizenga on June 7, 1975.



Rev. Narvesen served Church of the Lutheran Brethren congregations in Duluth, Minnesota; Superior, Wisconsin; Nanuet, New York; Tempe, Arizona; DeWitt, Iowa; Cranston, Rhode Island; and Cape Coral, Florida. He is survived by his wife Jayne, son Peter, and daughters Krista and Kimberly, as well as grandchildren Gideon, Stella, and Evelyn Olson, and George and Ellie Hexum. Blessed be the memory of Kenneth Narvesen.

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Closest Thing to Jesus?

Last year in June, a group of former NFL stars traveled to Rome for a meeting with the Pope. Former New York Jets running back Curtis Martin summed up the experience: “This was a wonderful day. Just to have an opportunity to shake his hand and to feel his presence in person was a blessing. He is the closest thing we know to Jesus walking the earth.”

Is he? This is not to question either the Pope’s gravitas or the depth of Martin’s emotions that day. It must have been an overwhelming experience. But who *really* is the closest thing to Jesus walking this earth?

Historically, there was Enoch, of course, who “walked with God.” They were so close that one day God invited Enoch to come to his place (Genesis 5:24). And there was King David, described by God himself as “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22). What about the Apostle John, who gave himself the title, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:7)? That’s a pretty bold statement. People could have called him on it if it wasn’t true. But it was. John was really close to our Lord.

The expression *close to Jesus* could imply either a close relationship with him or—as Martin probably meant—being very similar to Jesus. If you think about it, it’s really a strange thing that we could speak of anybody as being close to Jesus—in either way!

By rights, *no one* is anywhere near close to Jesus. We humans are by nature and in practice sinners! How can we walk with God? How can we pretend to be like his Son? How dare we enter the presence of God? “Woe is me!” says Isaiah, speaking for all of us. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips... and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5). He was rightly terrified.

We don’t come close to Jesus. We can’t. But Jesus comes close to us. First as Immanuel, God with us, to live the righteous life none of us are capable of, and then to suffer and die—as he took for himself the consequence of my sin and your sin. The result? Based on your faith, God considers you righteous, because of his Son. And draws you near to him.

Today, Jesus comes close to us again, and very personally. His Spirit descended on his followers at Pentecost. From then on, every believer enjoys the indwelling presence of this Counselor, this Comforter, who is God. Now that’s *close*!

Who is the closest thing to Jesus walking this earth today? You are! If you know Jesus, you bring the presence of God to everyone you encounter.

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

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