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**Quiet Moments**

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

**There is a Future**

H.E. WISLØFF



**There are times** when one feels completely finished. You are not needed by anyone. Nothing succeeds. There seems to be no future. The Word of God comes to such a person, “Surely, there is a future for you.”

But your future is in God. Without him you are heading for the great hopelessness. It is in God’s thoughts for your life that you have hope for the future. Maybe everything is closed before you so that you may see him whom you have never had time to see.

The Word about the future is a Word for all the true children of God. It is for them that there is a future.

You go with the feeling that you are accused and

condemned. Your disobedience and rebellion, your indolence and sluggishness have robbed you of your courage.

Your future lies in the thoughts of peace God has concerning you. Turn from the path of disobedience and yield to his thoughts. Then he gives you courage to live and power to die.

*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.*

# This Sickness Will Not End in Death

PAUL LARSON

If the previous couple months have affirmed one thing to me about the nature of the Church, it is our *togetherness*.

The spring of 2020 will undoubtedly go down in history as a vulnerable and difficult season of concern, grief, isolation, and loss. And, in our great *missing* of each other and our gatherings, have we not caught a fresh scent of true fellowship, of our need and nature to somehow in some way connect, gather, pray, share joy, and support one another?

Jesus once gave a word in the face of isolation. Of the grave illness of Lazarus, he assured his disciples, “This sickness will not end in death” (John 11:4).

Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha were close friends of Jesus. John says, “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus” (11:5). In their heartache and worry, and in their trust relationship with Jesus, these sisters send word to Jesus: “Lord, the one you love is sick” (11:3). Similar urgent, expectant prayers have undoubtedly been prayed during this pandemic, just as ardent now as then, “Lord, the one you love is sick.”

Jesus explains that while he is never the cause of sin’s curse in its many outcomes, yet he remains sovereign through human pain and peril. Jesus, in every trial and circumstance, is always at work to save. Three times in this chapter (vv.4,15,42) we are assured that, while in the trial we are only able to *count the pain, the infections, the deaths*, God knows the count of those who—through this trial—in their seeking are found, in their doubt come to know, and in their dead hearts are resurrected eternally alive.

In the temporal world, by the time Jesus leaves for Bethany, Lazarus has died. “What! Lazarus dead? I thought Jesus said... didn’t we all hear him say, ‘This sickness will not end in death?’”

When Jesus arrives at Bethany, he goes to the tomb that has housed Lazarus’ dead body for four days. He is deeply moved at



herlordship/istock

the grief and unbelief he sees; this too is part of the weight he will soon bear to the cross. Jesus commands the stone across Lazarus’ tomb be rolled away, and calls out with the Voice of resurrection power, “Lazarus, come forth!” And... *he does*.

We must ask ourselves, of whom is this promise spoken? The answer is, *the one Jesus loves*. The one who is his own. Ones like Lazarus and Martha. Ones like Mary, who bowed herself in humility, willing to wash his feet with her own hair—as confession of sin, and confession of faith—with gratitude to him as her Savior. Of such people it may be said, “This sickness will not end in death.” And, this *must always* be said of the one Jesus loves!

I must tell you, as much as we know this can be said of every one who has come by repentance and faith to be the friend of Jesus, you must also realize *the opposite is true* for any person who is not by faith the friend of Jesus. No matter one’s health, strength, or security. If they are not by faith *one Jesus loves*, the opposite is true. For the person outside of Christ it cannot be said, “This sickness will not end in death.” Rather, it must be said of this person, “This apparent health, this seeming strength, this transient security, *will not end in Life.*”

On the cross, the promise of Jesus to those he loves is put to the test of faith.

Here on the cross, the predicament, the punishment, the prognoses of all that makes us ill by sin is laid on our Friend. He takes it all onto himself, and bears it, finally destroying the deadly contagion of sin and all its refuse in our lives! But here also at the cross is the charge against all who have made themselves not friends but enemies of Christ. For all their apparent strength, wellness, and goodness, it will not end for them in life, but in eternal death. For their greatest malady will be their rejection of Jesus as friend, and his innocent blood will be upon them, forever unforgiven.

Finally, to all of us who are by faith the friend of Jesus, who have been made well—the cross reminds us that we carry within us, in our hands and in our mouths, the *great antidote* our dying neighbors need. It is the very gospel of Jesus.

At this vulnerable time in our world, I say to all: friend of Jesus, seeker of Jesus, isolated and spiritually-separated from him—believe! Become by faith one he loves. Trust his promise: “This sickness will not end in death.”

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

Watch the video:

[www.clba.org/](http://www.clba.org/)

[this-will-not-end-in-death](#)







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# One Little Word Shall Fell Him

BEN HOSCH

I am becoming ever more convinced that the Western world doesn't know quite what to do with the character of Satan. And by all accounts it seems that my hypothesis may be correct. A 2009 study by George Barna found that 59% of those who claimed to be Christian agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement that Satan "is not a living being but is a symbol of evil."<sup>1</sup> It appears as though belief in Satan is passé.

Satan. The mere mention of that name may conjure up images of a towering red figure with horns, wings, a pointed tail and hooves for feet (thank you very much, Dante Alighieri). We have the phrase "The devil made me do it!" The implication? Satan has the power to coerce us to do things against our own will. In the theological world, we may assert that Satan wouldn't be able to best God in an arm-wrestling match, but in the

pop culture world we've made the odds pretty close. We may be alarmed that Christians are abandoning or redefining the biblical teaching on Satan; yet, given how the Western Christian world has historically portrayed Satan, I can honestly understand why. But maybe, just maybe, there are a couple things about Satan we have forgotten.

## THE BIBLICAL PICTURE OF SATAN:

Saint Peter reminds us that the devil is a lion on the prowl (1 Peter 5:8). But what does this mean? We have horror movies galore that would lead us to believe that Satan is a blood-thirsty monster hiding behind a rock. However, holy Scripture needs to be our guide in these matters. The name "Satan" first appears at the beginning of the book of Job. His name means "accuser." More importantly, he cannot pester Job without

God's permission and direction. In the Garden of Eden he appears as a crafty serpent, sowing seeds of doubt. In the wilderness Satan misquotes Scripture in order to tempt Jesus. Jesus tells us in John 8:44 that Satan is the father of lies, the originator of deceit. Paul makes us aware in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that Satan masquerades himself as an angel of light; he wants to portray evil as good, lie as truth. The characterization of Satan in the Bible is more sneaky and manipulative than ominous and foreboding.

I live in Taiwan, where there seems to be a temple on every street corner. Patrons of these temples throw moon blocks to obtain "yes" or "no" answers from the temple god about how to have financial success, good health, good luck, or other such things. They might pick out fortune sticks. They may hire a spirit medium who will use a chair or another object to

***“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”***

**1 John 3:8**

write a message from a dead ancestor or god—all of which looks a little scary to Western eyes.

Now a Western person would look at this as superstition, and wonder “Why would anyone believe in that?” It’s quite simple; because they think it works. Their thinking goes like this: “Praying to this or that god brought me success. Praying to the ancestors keeps bad luck away. Crowded temples are crowded because the god there has a reputation for being effective at answering certain kinds of prayers. Believing in this works for me; Jesus will bring me nothing but trouble.”

And that’s how Satan works. He sows the lie that what God has said and done in Jesus Christ just isn’t enough, isn’t worth it. Then he uses fear, accusation, apathy, whatever is at his disposal to feed that lie. You and I are quite the same. We have our own temples we frequent when we feel the need; they might be called “shopping malls” or “sports arenas,” but they function in the same way. We may retreat to movies or video games when life seems hard, because they make us feel better. We do things of no biblical value because they make us feel good, because what God has said and done in Jesus Christ doesn’t seem to be enough for us.

#### **THE DEFEAT OF SATAN:**

Different cultures have different ultimate questions. In the West the ultimate questions have been “How can I be saved?”, “How can I get right with God?”, or “Who can take my guilt away?” So it’s no wonder we have favored *penal substitution*, that on the cross Christ died in my place to pay for my sin and offer complete and total forgiveness. And to this we should all say, “This is most certainly true!”, because it is!

But in Taiwan the ultimate question is, “Who has more power? Jesus or the god at this temple?” A very different question that penal substitution doesn’t quite answer. Have we in the Western world favored Romans 3:23-24, “... for 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,” over 1 John 3:8, “The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work”? Does the doctrine of Justification exclude or lessen the purpose of Christ to destroy the devil’s work? When Christ uttered from the cross “It is finished!”, we have rightfully assumed that he meant sin was once and for all atoned for, but we may have regrettably forgotten it also meant the work of Satan was undone once and for all.

Whenever I visit a temple, I offer my own prayer: “Heavenly Father, may the ‘god’ in this temple never answer another prayer.” Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 that what is offered in the temples of false gods is actually offered to demons. Satan and his minions are still active in peddling lies. However, earlier in chapter 8 Paul reminds us that in these temples an idol is really nothing at all. Satan and his minions have been defeated; all their work will come to naught in the end. Christ came to destroy the devil’s work, and he has! “This is most certainly true!”

We call this teaching *Christus Victor*, and quite honestly, in the West, we could do with a little more of it in our theological thinking. Let us not give Satan too much credit. Our old friend Martin Luther may have emphasized justification by faith (and quite rightfully so), but let us hear

the good news of *Christus Victor* ring clear from his pen:

And though this world,  
with devils filled,  
should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear,  
for God hath willed  
his truth to triumph through us;  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
for lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.

One little word—τετέλεσται—“It is finished!”, and the devil’s work was undone! This is good news for Taiwan, and good news for you.



*Rev. Ben Hosch serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as a missionary for Lutheran Brethren International Mission to the unreached people of Taiwan.*

## Source

1. “Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan and the Holy Spirit Exist.” Barna, 13 April, 2009, <https://www.barna.com/research/most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exist/>.



Radachynskiy/Stock

# Separated by Sin

PAUL COUCH

I really wish I was perfectly good! As a kid I grew up thinking I was pretty good. I could compare myself to my friends and thought I came off favorably. I did not get in much trouble, so I took that as a sign that, all in all, I was good. But as the years go by, I have become more aware that “pretty good” does not cut it. The standard has been raised to perfectly good! “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Leviticus 19:2b). And failure to meet this standard has a terrible result: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

I don’t want separation from the living God. But the evidence that I am not actually good is mounting. Perhaps at one time I thought that becoming a pastor might make me a better person,

but my experience is to the contrary. In fact, I think becoming a pastor has simply offered more opportunity for me to see that goodness is not really my strength.

One day I was in my office and received a phone call from a concerned parent. His child was in a class I was teaching, and he was concerned about something his child had written, which would eventually be read before the church. I listened dutifully and told him I’d look at it. Examining it, I concluded it was just an issue of semantics. I figured I had a pretty good grasp of what the student was writing, and that the concerned parent, who was not a Christian, didn’t understand. I determined not to make any changes.

My decision not to act didn’t make him happy, which led to a follow-up phone call. I was immediately defensive and failed to hear the genuine concern of a

person who wanted to interact with his child about their worldview. I turned it into an opportunity to make this about what the parent didn’t understand. It was not a pleasant conversation, and it ended with the words, “I’m never coming to your church again!”

A couple years later, God brought this conversation back to my mind. He gently showed me that I was missing the point. My end of the conversation was all about my analysis of the parent and his child, but I had not really considered myself and how I was responding. The scenario replayed in my mind, but this time I took the time to consider the father’s words—what he was concerned about. I should not have disregarded it so easily. I had not helped their relationship, and I certainly did not help that father see Christ. I confessed my sin to God and revealed



***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”***

**1 John 1:9**

in the good news that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

I had wronged this man and knew that I would need to speak to him as well. I found his number and called him, praying desperately that God would give me favor in this. When he answered, I explained why I was calling—how I’d been praying and God had shown me that I had treated him wrongly. I then asked him to forgive me. His first response was a question, “Why are you doing this now?” I repeated that I believed God was moving me to acknowledge my wrong against him and seek his forgiveness. His answer was swift. “No, I will not forgive you.” And the call soon ended.

I was surprised. Not surprised by his response. I was prepared for that answer, even though it still stung. But as I sat down and tried to calm myself after the confrontation, what surprised me was the absence of accusation and guilt. I had clearly wronged this man. I had hurt him and deepened a divide in his relationship with his son. I had helped to harden a heart. But even with this man’s words

echoing in my ears, there were words that rang louder and truer. They were words that overcame his words, and left me with an assurance that even my trembling body could not block out: “You are forgiven for the sake of Christ!” I knew it was true.

What I now felt was not guilt, but simply deep sadness. Sadness for the effects of my sin, but also a sadness over the prison this man was in. As much as I wanted this man’s forgiveness and the joy that would have brought to my heart, I was keenly aware of his condition. This is what forgiveness does. It frees us. It frees us from self-loathing and self-focus. It raises our eyes to the goodness of God and the needs of our neighbor.

Friend, if you have guilt or shame banging on the walls of your heart in unrelenting, numbing fashion—the weight of a burdened conscience, the fear of the wrath of God for what you rightly deserve—please hear that there is a place to go with it. There is a place for you to turn, or more accurately a *Person* to turn to. The *One* who has been ultimately insulted and wronged. The *One* whose laws we broke.

The Scripture does not simply report to

you what God has done, but it declares to you what God has done *for you*. Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin, so that you might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). You are forgiven; you will not die for your sin.

Am I perfectly good now? Well, not in your eyes or mine! But in the eyes of my heavenly Father and for the sake of Jesus Christ who died and lives again for me, I am!



*Rev. Paul Couch serves as pastor of Bethany Lutheran Brethren Church in Staten Island, New York.*



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# The Last Enemy

CALEB LARSON

**T**he Thursday after Easter Sunday I was making rounds, and I came across a man sitting in a wheelchair by a table of the common room. I didn't believe we had met before, certainly not on this unit, but there was something familiar about him I couldn't place. This was not too unusual in a small town.

As I passed by, he reached out suddenly toward me. I could tell by his eyes that he was afraid, likely unsure of where he was or what was happening around him. He opened his mouth to speak, and closed it again, and opened again, but no sound came out. Grasping my hand, he squeezed it tightly.

"It's alright," I said softly, crouching down to eye level. "It's alright. I'm a chaplain. I visit with patients here and

offer support and prayer. Is there anything that I can pray about for you today?"

A spark of recognition seemed to flicker in his eyes. He looked at me, and for a brief moment the terror faded, and he looked imperious and proud, a man used to having authority. He opened his mouth to speak, but again no sound emerged. After a moment he closed it again, his jaw clenched. He released my hand and looked away.

Standing now closer to him, I could see his clothes were expensive and well-made, his nails trimmed and manicured, his hair well-styled. He had likely been a person of respect in the community, which was probably why he seemed so familiar. Although I could not place a name, I'm sure I had seen him at public gatherings or community events.

Even though I have seen it so many times, it's always amazing what age and infirmity can do to a person. The star athlete, renowned for their peak physical condition, now laid so low they can't lift their head off the pillow. The brilliant thinker, now unable to recall their own name or the names of their loved ones.

I remember one man talking about visiting his father at the end of his life. His father had always been strong, unshakable, and cruel. He had terrorized his family for years with his violent outbursts. Now, lying in a hospital bed, frail with cancer, tubes running from his arms... his son found himself pitying the man he had always feared, always hated. Even monsters look harmless in the face of death. How the mighty have fallen!

As I left the gentleman and made my





John Zwiers • CEO

## PROVIDING CHRIST-CENTERED CARE AND SUPPORT

We care for people who have significant vulnerabilities. Some of the loved ones we tend to are at the end of their time on earth, cared for by our hospice service. Others are in our care sites. Some live in apartments while others are cared for with 24-7 nursing staff.

READ HOW YOUR MINISTRY IS THRIVING IN COVID-19  
[www.lbhomes.org/covid19](http://www.lbhomes.org/covid19)



way back to the nursing station, one of the nurses spoke in a quiet tone as I approached.

“Hard to believe, isn’t it? I never thought we’d see him here... and to see *him* like this, it’s crazy.”

“Who is he?” I asked. “I feel like I should know him; he seems familiar, but I just can’t place him.”

The nurse looked surprised. “Do you really not recognize him? It was all over the newspapers this weekend—I thought everyone knew.”

“It was Easter this past weekend,” I reminded her. “I tend to be busy with Easter services and celebration, and didn’t get around to checking the news.”

If I hoped my reply would elicit sympathy, I was disappointed. “Still,” she said, “I’m just surprised you didn’t hear. That’s Death.”

“Death?”

“Yeah, that’s Death.”

It took a moment for the words to sink in, and I looked back to the man again in shock. I could see it now. I had encountered Death many times before, always so imperious, so commanding... To see him now like this: decrepit, powerless, wasting away... it was no wonder I had not recognized him.

After a moment, I blurted out the only question in my mind. “What happened?” The nurse frowned, “I don’t know all the details... they brought him into the ER early Sunday morning, and after a day or two in ICU they transferred him here for care.”

“Is he going to recover?”

She shook her head. “It doesn’t sound good. He’s on comfort care only now. He’s still alive, but it looks like he’s passing away.”

I had no words. Death and I had never been close... I had always found him cruel, and callous, and unwelcome... but I could not even begin to imagine a world without him. I had no words. The nurse must have noticed my shock, for after a moment she spoke again.

“I was surprised, too,” she said, “but I guess even Death has to die someday.”

I thought about those words as I drove back home that day. It was the same drive as always, but it seemed different that day for some reason. As I passed an old church building a small sign hanging outside caught my eye. I’m sure I had driven by the sign a number of times, but never really paid it much attention. It was a simple phrase, written in Greek and English. A part of an old Paschal hymn:

*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death.*

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

1 Corinthians 15:20-26



Rev. Caleb Larson serves as chaplain at LB Homes in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

CLB Shared Ministry: Year End Contribution Report

**\$2,900,000**

2019-20 Contribution Goal

**\$2,665,244**

2019-20 Total Contributions

The CLB Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 2020.

## Test Me in This

**LaWAYNE ROGNESS**

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,’ says the Lord Almighty” (Malachi 3:10-11).

**H**ow is it going at your church? By the time you read this article, the COVID-19 pandemic prevention measures are probably becoming your new normal. I assume that many of our churches have now adapted to new ways of worshiping our risen Savior. Most likely you are meeting via some type of social media or video streaming service.

As I was listening to one of our CLB churches recently, I learned that during this time they have almost doubled their following! Could this be one of the many blessings that are going to come out of this terrible pandemic?

How has your church been able to meet your obligations? Are your offerings continuing week to week as you work to determine how best to support your church, while possibly dealing with unemployment? How can you give to your church when you’re not meeting in person and passing the offering plate? There are so many questions when it comes to supporting our mission in this

environment! As the Director of Finance of the CLB, I ask that all our readers be sure to take care of your churches. The churches of the CLB are the backbone of our mission. Your church needs your tithe. If you’re unsure how to tithe, ask your church how you can continue to give, resting in the promises in Malachi, that the Lord will pour down a blessing upon you as you give. If, as you give to your local church as the Lord leads, you find there is more yet that he gives you, would you think also of the CLB?

Here at the CLB, April was our last month of the fiscal year. We needed \$615,000 to meet our budget for the fiscal year. As Mission Directors, we have sought the Lord to lead us and lead you in your own April budgets. Now as you read this, those days are past. So, as we look ahead into the coming months as this pandemic continues, we pray that it will diminish and leave us. So, we urge you again, please continue to support the work of your local church. Many of our churches support the CLB through their local giving, and many individuals support us above that level. However you are called to support the CLB, we so appreciate that support.

As I close, Joshua 1:9 is a Scripture passage that I have shared frequently and grown to better understand: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” I’m sure

that during this pandemic many of us can admit that we are afraid—afraid for our families, our church friends—even to the place of discouragement. But we have this promise, that our Lord will go with us and will assist us in being strong. Take care and stay safe.

*LaWayne Rogness is Director of Finance and Personnel for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*

Support the CLB:

**ONLINE:**  
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**BY MAIL (USA):**  
P.O. Box 655  
Fergus Falls, MN 56538

**BY MAIL (CANADA):**  
P.O. Box 739  
Birch Hills, SK S0J 0G0



## COVID-19

JEAN WILSDON

As I write this article, the world is adjusting to a new normal. I have had many conversations in recent weeks with women across North America. Lives have been turned upside down. I sincerely pray that “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

During this very challenging time I urge all of us to remember these facts:

1. God LOVES us. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
2. God is WITH us. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deuteronomy 31:6).

The biggest need of our lives is not to be saved from a virus, but to be saved from our sin. Our disobedience separates us from God and all our good works cannot reconnect us. Thankfully, God provided Jesus. “‘He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed’” (1 Peter 2:24). Furthermore, he cancels the sin. “When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:13-14).

I urge each of you to turn to the Word of God for encouragement and comfort. Don’t take time off from feeding your spirit. Stay in the Word. Stay in Prayer.

*Jean Wilsdon serves the WMCLB as co-director.*



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## Ministry Update

BARBARA HEGGLAND

This has been a very busy year for the WM Leadership Team. We have completed the reorganization of our ministry team. As part of this reorganization we needed significant updates to the Constitution and Bylaws as well as new job descriptions. We also have been constantly updating the Strategic Plan. Beta-testing of “virtual” Bible studies has been conducted and we are looking at switching them to an educational platform. Dr. David Veum, president of Lutheran Brethren Seminary, has offered resources to help with this.

In the last weeks, we have seen a huge surge of demand for the virtual Bible studies. Obviously, this coincides with the announcement of the pandemic. Women are eager to stay connected with their church community and with one another. It is exciting to note that this includes women of all ages.

The leadership team met recently and decided to make some quick adjustments to the Strategic Plan. We resolved to push forward with rapid expansion of the plans for virtual Bible studies, reallocating resources toward this goal.

This is designed to meet a demand that we believe will continue to grow. Our WMCLB Convention was to be held as part of the CLB Biennial Convention in June, and both have been postponed. Watch for updates and information about how WMCLB will have a part in any rescheduled or modified Convention plans.

*Barbara Heggland serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as co-director and chair of Women’s Ministries.*



Visit: [www.WMCLB.org](http://www.WMCLB.org)





President Paul Larson standing within the foundation of the house built by CLB Missionaries Rev. J. I. and Sophie Kaardal.

# 100 Years in Chad: Foundations

DAN VENBERG

**P**astor Poulo Jacques, the Director of Evangelism and Mission for the EFLT (Chadian Lutheran Brethren Church) paused for a moment, and said, “Here is the foundation of the house originally built by Missionary Kaardal in 1920...” Pastor Jacques could hardly contain his excitement as he gave us a tour and shared with us some of the history and stories of the pioneer work of the first Lutheran Brethren missionaries, recognized as the first ever Christian witness in this region of Africa.

As I listened, I reflected on what we had experienced over the past two days. An estimated 10,000 people had descended upon the small town of Léré, a community in southwestern Chad, to celebrate a centennial of gospel witness in this region of Africa; to celebrate the Church that had grown out of the testimony of those pioneer Lutheran Brethren missionaries. Today, the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in Africa is

over 300,000 strong and growing! This is a Church of diverse unity, made up of multiple ethnic groups. This is a Church that—despite their context of existing in one of the most challenging economic, social and environmental climates in the world—has thrived. By God’s grace, they are making disciples of Jesus Christ in their own communities and beyond. And now, in mid-March 2020, they were celebrating 100 years of gospel presence in Chad. Thousands upon thousands had gathered for worship, rejoicing in God’s faithfulness to his Church. It was such a privilege to be part of it.

Listening to the stories, I wondered how our pioneer missionaries would react if they could observe what I was observing today. What would Berge Revne say, who buried his wife Herborg in Africa after 42 years of missionary service, if he could have been here today? What would Jetmund Kaardal and his wife Sofie say if they could stand today within the

foundation of their first physical house in Chad, and witness the spiritual house of the Chadian Lutheran Brethren Church that grew out of their faithful witness? What about Esther Fuglestad, who buried her husband Ralph on this very hill not a year after they arrived in Africa as a young married couple, marking his tomb with a headstone that reads: “...to live is Christ and to die is gain”? What would she say, if she could witness the multitude worshipping the same Christ that Ralph died for? What would Anna Aandal say, who as a missionary nurse served tirelessly for 37 years, if she could see the dependence of these multitudes on Jesus, the Great Physician?

And as the decades rolled on, and more missionaries served, all sacrificing some, some sacrificing all—what would they say today? And even in our present day, as our missionaries continue to serve—not only in Africa, but also in Asia—what would they say? And as we the Church

***“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”***

***Galatians 6:9***

continue to call and send missionaries, what shall we say?

Perspective is so important. If we dwell on the worries of this world, it can be tempting to question the worth of mission. Missionaries sacrifice much to go. The sending Church sacrifices much to send them. It costs money. It comes with risk. It is stressful and time consuming to learn new languages and adapt to new cultures. Our best laid plans and strategies can fall apart. Our best efforts can seemingly come to naught. Ministry is hard and costly.

The centennial celebration of the Church in Chad serves as a good reminder of why we continue to be a disciple-making Church. It's because God is a disciple-making God. God is the one who sacrificed all to come to us, and calls us now, in turn, to sacrifice and go to others. God has been faithful through all generations. Because of God's faithfulness, we respond with praise to him for his work in the world, and with renewed hope as we look to the present and future. We celebrate the foundation of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, which since day one, set herself apart as a Church passionate and committed to be a people sent out into the world on mission. And we celebrate the foundation laid by our missionaries, our pastors, our evangelists, and all those who minister the gospel in a myriad of ways, serving as a model for future generations. This gospel in which we are saved and for which we are called is so worth it! On Christ the solid rock we stand, confident that he who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it.

We continue to set our hands to the plow and look ahead. The mission continues. The harvest remains plentiful. The workers remain few. Let us continue to pray the Lord of the Harvest to raise up more laborers. May we not be people who rest on our laurels; may we not be a Church that is lethargic or apathetic, sitting on the sidelines of the ripe harvest fields, while endlessly critiquing what is happening “out there.” Let us rather be the Church that rolls up our sleeves and wades into the harvest. This is not about those “amazing” missionaries. This is about you, about me, about all of us. Participating in the harvest is not about how great we are, how qualified we are, how special we are. No, it is about God commissioning us, God qualifying us, God enabling us, God redeeming us, through the work of Jesus Christ. We are special, not because of *what* we are, in and of ourselves, but because of *whose* we are. That is the foundation on which we stand.

Let's get out there and continue to build this Church, through Christ who strengthens us.

*Dan Venberg serves as Mission Mobilizer and Recruiter for Lutheran Brethren International Mission.*

**WHO'S  
NEXT?**

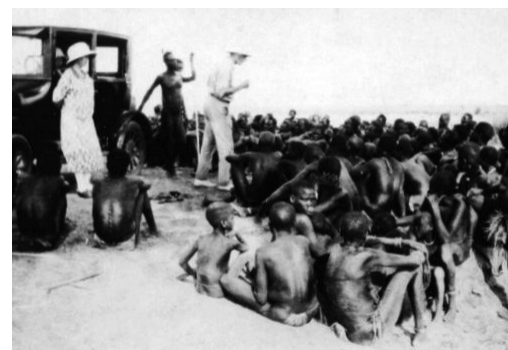
*Is the Lord calling you to International Mission?  
Contact: LBIM@CLBA.org*



*Revnes and Kaardals, in front of the Léré mission house, 1920.*



*Missionaries Berge and Herborg Revne in dugout canoe, 1920s.*



*Missionary Revne, preaching at Bosgoi, 1927.*



*Missionary Kaardal, reading the Word, 1960s.*

*Missionary Anna Aandal with Chadian boy, 1960s.*







# 100 Years in Chad: Centennial Address

*On March 15, 2020, CLB President Paul Larson spoke to over 10,000 Chadians gathered in celebration of 100 years of gospel proclamation in Chad, Africa.*

**PAUL LARSON**

**M**y dear brothers and sisters in Christ of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Chad: I bring you greetings from the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America. I am greatly honored and full of joy to celebrate with you this marvelous centennial. In Chad, hundreds of thousands have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we, your brothers and sisters of the North American Church, rejoice with you!

In 1920 (100 years ago!), our first missionary couple, Berge and Herborg Revne—soon to be followed by Jetmund and Sofie Kaardal—reached the interior of Africa, and first settled here in Léré, on these grounds. The early Lutheran Brethren mission was a great test of faith and courage and patience. These early

missionaries struggled through multiple barriers, including the authorities' repeated refusal to allow mission work to begin, repeated illness, the return home of some missionaries due to health issues, and the death of others.

The early response of the Chadian people was one of disinterest. There were significant language and cultural barriers to understanding the gospel, and there was outright rejection of the missionaries' message.

But this mission and its timing belonged to God. It was not until 1927 on March 20—after seven long, struggling years of mission work—that the first converts to Christianity were baptized: a young man of the Mundang tribe named Captain took the Christian name Yohana, and was

baptized along with his three-year-old daughter.

J.H. Levang reveled in his history of the CLB that the baptism of the first converts took place in this way: "At that... same Sunday service 'and in the same water,' Revne baptized Elmer Kaardal, the two-month-old son of Missionary and Mrs. Kaardal, into the Church of Jesus Christ."

"In the same waters of baptism"—together! Chadian and American Lutheran Brethren believers united in Christ! What a beautiful picture from the start, of the gospel's fruitfulness in Chad! Then, as now, the CLB of North America and of Chad—we are united by the same gospel, the same Savior, same cross, same Word, same baptism, same faith, and same mission! This same water





of baptism is greater to unite us, than the ocean of any differences that could separate us. The gospel *still* crosses all boundaries to bring God together with man, and strangers together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The bonds of the gospel mission between us are sure and strong—not just in the history behind us, but for the mission ahead of us. We are partners in mission who can encourage one another, pray for one another, learn from one another, and hold one another true to our course and calling. May we pause and consider, on this blessed and grateful occasion, how rich a gift, and how necessary in Christ’s coming kingdom, and to our own spiritual life, is the passage of the gospel cross-culturally in mission.

Every farmer has some means to separate the shell from the nut, the peel from the banana, the bean from the pod, the hull from the kernel seed. So, too, does God the great Farmer, Sower, and Reaper of the gospel. There seems a *great unseen reason* God calls his Church as a “Missionary Church,” a “sent” people of pilgrimage, who are ever called to “Go” with the gospel to other people who may be of great cultural and physical distance from themselves. The reason is that this missionary journey of the gospel *itself* is a means by which God preserves the gospel message pure and clear in our hearts!

The missionary journey of the gospel is

full of difficulty, challenge, and sacrifice. It requires the missionaries to stretch and extend themselves—to sacrifice the familiar and comfortable, to learn a new language, and new cultural customs. Most of all, it requires that missionaries learn to love strangers unlike themselves in order that these people might hear and trust the gospel of Jesus.

It is in this missionary journey that God can refine and remove whatever we attach to the gospel that is not the gospel itself. Certainly, the gospel will always clothe itself in culture. But in this passing of the gospel from one culture to another: the “chaff” of our idolatries, the rules and legalisms that are often added by culture to the Gospel over time, the light weightless hulls of our traditions, comforts, prides, prejudices and preferences, even our racial fears or animosities are exposed. As with a winnowing fork, these may be *sifted away* in the “wind of the missionary journey” and be *separated* from the pure and precious kernel, which is the life-giving seed of the gospel. This seed is good news of atonement by our crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ!

In the gospel of Jesus—his life, death and resurrection for us—we who are contagiously contaminated by sin, we who are fearful, alienated and isolated from God and each other, are brought near and brought together by him whose gospel touch makes us well.

Scripture says the Church is one

body—“We were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Jesus speaks of himself as “the bread of life.” He says, “This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:48,51). It is the one meal we all share—his body offered on the cross. And in Ephesians 4:4-6, God’s Word says, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

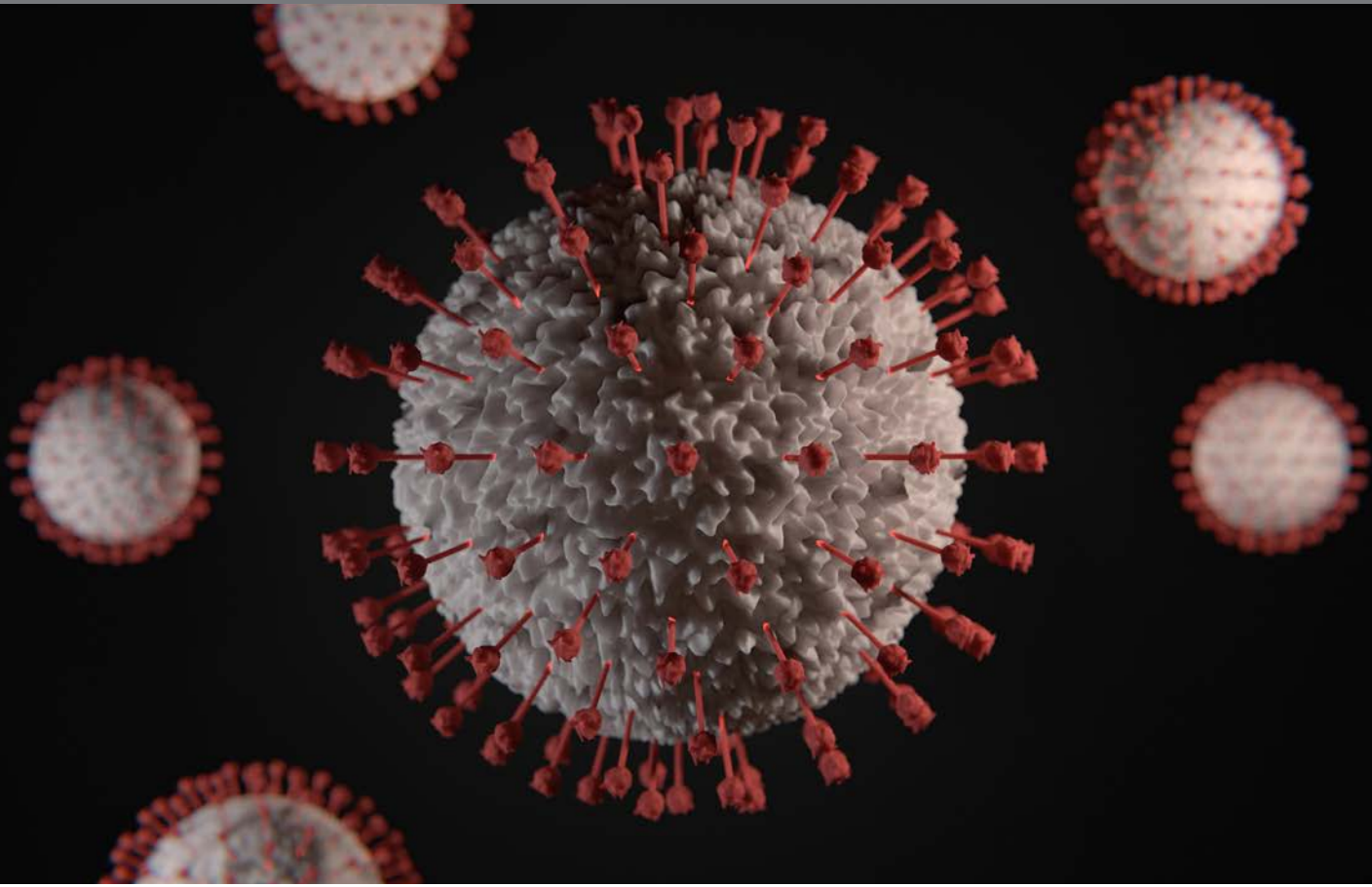
Just as 100 years ago right here in Léré our forefathers reveled, so we rejoice that we are still one in Christ, and one with each other! We are one body, sharing one Spirit, one hope, one faith, one God and Father—one salvation and one mission. For we, you and I, the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Chad and of North America—Yes! Yes, indeed!—we still are baptized in the same water!

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

Watch a video excerpt or read the full manuscript:

[www.clba.org/chad-centennial-address](http://www.clba.org/chad-centennial-address)





Viktor Forgacs/Unsplash

# Coronavirus: New Challenges, New Ministry

RYAN NILSEN

I pen this article on April 1, realizing so much will have changed by the time you read it. While we don't know what will happen tomorrow, most indications point to a dramatic increase in coronavirus cases and deaths in the weeks to come. A week ago the CDC reported 68,440 cases of coronavirus in the US. Today the CDC reports 213,144 cases. Chances are by the time you read this those numbers will sound small.

Everything has changed: businesses closing, millions filing for unemployment, schools teaching students online—and churches unable to gather for what has been their signature expression of faith: corporate worship around Word and

Sacrament. Ministry programs centered around gathering in church facilities have had to cease while church leaders scramble to replace them with online equivalents. These disruptions will end some churches, stop some ministry programs, and impact generosity patterns. My role serving in North American Mission has completely changed as I have begun leading our response efforts. Many of the important things on my plate were put on hold as a whole new set of priorities and challenges came into view. And I know that pales in comparison to the massive changes experienced by our pastors.

This situation leads me back to

a Scripture passage I preached on recently—the choosing of the Seven from Acts 6:1-7. It's an account of the Church facing its first major international challenge. A group of widows in an ethnic minority group were being forgotten in daily food distributions. It is the kind of problem that nowadays often causes power struggles or church splits.

The apostles addressed the problem in a healthy way: they changed the structure of the church. They created a new ministry, gave away part of their authority, and empowered the congregation, within guidelines and boundaries they laid out, to select the new ministry leaders. With this new team functioning, the apostles

***“So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.”***

***Acts 6:7***

could focus on their responsibility to proclaim the gospel—and the Church continued to grow.

I believe the coronavirus pandemic provides us a great opportunity to live out the lessons we learn from Acts 6:

1. God helps us change the way we do ministry in order to remain healthy. The apostles, who previously controlled all the finances and administrative decisions of the Church for thousands of believers, had to release their control over what was surely a special area of ministry—the feeding of widows under their care. There are many times when our attachment to certain patterns of ministry keep us from trying fresh approaches. Sometimes we need God to change the conditions around us to help us discern how we should carry out the mission he has given us.
2. God finds ways to turn the Church back to his mission. In Acts, we see God use this challenge to keep the Church focused on disciple making. Their response had a direct impact on their ability to multiply disciples and engage their communities. Acts tells us that many in the city were impacted by how the Church handled this crisis, and the Church grew dramatically as a result. Our current crisis also gives us a chance to pause from ministry activities and reflect: what is essential for us to continue as the Church? Churches around the world are discovering new ways to experience and express worship, make disciples differently, and serve their communities with Christ’s love. For many churches,
3. God calls and equips his shepherds to lead. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit (the same Holy Spirit who is with us today) the apostles restructured the Church. They responded proactively to a complex, volatile situation and reorganized the Church through a collaborative and open process. One of the most remarkable factors I’ve noticed is how so many of our pastors were ready to lead when faced with the unexpected. I’ve been amazed to see how rapidly churches have moved their worship services online (some leaders facing criticism as they did so), followed by small groups and other ministries, and then re-focus back on the hurting community all around them. And despite the hardships, many of our pastors are energized by the challenge that God has equipped them to face. While this crisis is frightening and stressful, God has been preparing his Church leaders for this moment.
4. God draws us together when the world pulls us apart. The early Church faced challenges because of religious tension and ethnic barriers within Jerusalem and the Roman Empire. Instead of the Church being torn apart by conflict, God grew the Church and expanded the circle of leadership to provide more care and connection within the Church. Today, stay-at-home orders have seriously hindered face-to-face contact. In its place, though,
5. God is our source of wisdom, grace, strength, and creativity. Reading the story of the Seven, it is easy to think that we could never handle a situation so gracefully! But we have hope, because the same God who took the bickering, distracted, fickle disciples and made them the apostles of the early Church is here for us too. This is the same God who guides and empowers us to join him in his mission in our communities and around the world. We don’t have to fear that we lack the ability to face this alone. God is the one who provides what we need to face this day.

When this crisis is over, our churches will be different. Some will close their doors. Some will emerge stronger. While our theology is unchanged, our expressions of ministry will be different. Through it all, God will ensure that his Church is changing so that it can keep pursuing his unchanging mission to redeem and rescue the world through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

*Rev. Ryan Nilsen is Associate Director of North American Mission for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*



# Who Knew?

MARTY VALDER

**F**ive months ago our house was overflowing with joyful expectation. It was Christmas Eve and the house was full: me, my wife, our children, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, three grandchildren, and my mother-in-law. We were preparing to eat our family's traditional dinner of beef stew and homemade dinner rolls (my son-in-law bakes well). The grandkids could barely restrain themselves as they impatiently waited to unwrap the generous array of packages under the Christmas tree.

Who knew that the Christmas Eve service at Hope Church in Everett, Washington would follow with a message of great hope? The angel said, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). Everyone rejoiced in the good news that the Savior had been born and went home with holiday joy.

Who knew, that in the next few days, news reports would break of a new virus causing pneumonia in a place called Wuhan, China? Living in the Pacific Northwest, news from China is a normal thing. We have a large Asian population and our area is economically influenced greatly by trade and shipping with countries west of us, across the Pacific Ocean. But Wuhan seemed so distant, so non-threatening.

Who knew, within the month, the United States would have its first confirmed case of the COVID-19 virus? The patient was from a nearby town, minutes from where I live and the church I serve. LITERALLY, just minutes away! Wuhan was now on our doorstep. The patient was being treated at Providence Medical Center in Everett, WA. I can't even begin to count the number of times I have been to that hospital to visit patients over the years. Thankfully, the virus patient recovered and was released from the hospital. Crisis averted, or so it seemed.

Who knew the celebration of the patient's recovery would be so short lived? For on February 29, 2020—yes, it was LEAP DAY—the United States would have its first fatality



merteren/Stock

from this dreaded virus. It was so unfair—undiagnosed, unsuspecting, an aged nursing home resident in Kirkland, WA had somehow contracted the virus and passed away from respiratory failure. This news began a cascade of panic and fear. Apprehension and uncertainty became the norm. Every day there were new reports, more changes, unprecedented closures! And the brutal statistics continued to project a dismal outcome. As of April 29, Washington has had 13,686 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 765 deaths. The great majority of these have been in King County and a significant number in Snohomish county. The CLB has seven congregations here: Rock of Ages in Seattle, Regeneration Church in Sammamish, Maple Park in Lynnwood, Hope Church in Everett, Grace in Edmonds, Anchor of Hope in Stanwood, and Word of Life in Marysville.

Who knew how fast the chaos would spread to the rest of the United States and the rest of the world? Who knew the impact on homes, families, churches, schools, vocations and communities? Who knew the frustrations, the adjustments, the toilet paper shortage, the cancellations, the chaos, the suffering, and the deaths?

Who knew? God knew and God knows! Please read all of Psalm 139, but treasure verse 5, "You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me." This COVID-19 pandemic is like nothing any of us have ever seen. It has changed our world. But the world belongs to our heavenly Father. He knew and he knows exactly what we need. God loves us, God cares for us, God is with us, God is for us, and God will save us. An angel announced it to shepherds long ago. That Word is still good news for today!

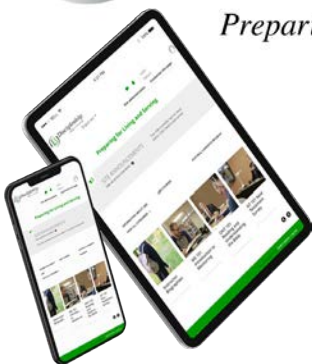
*Rev. Marty Valder is Pastor of Hope Church at Silver Lake in Everett, Washington.*

## Elders Ordained



L to R: Elder Frank Ramsey, Rev. Ryan Nilsen, Elders Tom Palmer, Mike Sosnicki (kneeling), Phil Havens, Mike Eldred (kneeling), Bill Nilsen, Travis Boucher, and Chris Roehl.

On March 24, 2019, Mike Sosnicki and Mike Eldred were ordained as elders at Praise Christian Fellowship in Barkhamsted, Connecticut. Rev. Ryan Nilsen officiated.



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**All courses are free until September 1, 2020.**

## Women's Ministries: Changes to Purpose Statement

In the reorganization of Women's Ministries of the CLB, the purpose statement in their Constitution has been reworded, hoping to keep it meaningful and easy to remember. The *Purpose Statement* appears below in bold and italic print.

### Women Together...

***Studying the Bible, individually and in groups, thereby growing in faith;***

This is the foundation for everything that we desire for our women. We encourage them to be involved in regular reading and study of God's Word, on their own and in fellowship with others. If there was a person you wanted to get to know, would you rather hear someone else's opinion of them, or meet them and hear their story first-hand? God has chosen to reveal himself by his Son Jesus, the Living Word, by means of the Bible, the written Word.

***Supporting the Mission of the CLB in North America and internationally, both in prayer and in giving;***

Women's Ministries has a long history of being involved with our mission to reach people overseas and here at home. We use your gifts to fund special projects such as solar power in Chad, the ministry to Japanese students in Seattle, and the annual retreat for seminary women. We want our women to know and pray for our wonderful missionary women in Asia and Africa using the latest communication technology.

***Serving Our Neighbors where we live and work, and pointing them to Christ;***

We encourage women to be involved in their churches and in their neighborhoods, using their gifts to build up the Body of Christ and to share the gospel through relationships with those around them.

***Sharing Our Lives, as sisters in Christ, with each other and with those who don't know him.***

We encourage fellowship that can include both fun and worship, providing a welcoming place to invite friends and an opportunity to get to know each other better. We have expanded our use of social media to reach out and bring women together.

The WMCLB is committed to seeking God's direction, and trusts that he will establish their path. If you have questions about Women's Ministries, visit: [www.WMCLB.org](http://www.WMCLB.org).

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## Time to Recalibrate

**W**hat have you been hearing and reading about most the last few months? I am guessing 99% of you quickly landed on coronavirus and everything connected to it. Therein lies our problem. As understandable as it may be to focus a great deal on COVID-19, we need to be aware of our human tendency to lose the ultimate good as we are pursuing the “necessary response” to our immediate situation.

After all, it is good to follow social distancing guidelines and learn how to use Facebook Live or Zoom to connect during this time. It is the proper use of common sense to wash hands, cover our mouths for coughing or sneezing, and protect each other from spreading this virus. It is also necessary to plan for reopening our businesses and our church buildings. You and I could both add to this list based on our particular contexts. But let’s not do that.

Instead I need to ask myself, do I need a recalibration? Do I need to honestly examine the direction of my time, my energy, and what is feeding my soul? Am I much more in tune with the latest pandemic news than I am God’s promises? Do I pay more attention to Dr. Fauci, President Trump, and other “Virus Voices” than I do the words of Jesus? Is my God and my Savior shaping my thoughts—or is something else?

God Almighty never settles for being a background voice or a god based on my convenience. He knows far better than I do that he must be my “all in all” if I am to find peace and rest. He is my Creator, my Redeemer and the great lover of my soul. I am incredibly blessed when I see God as he truly is. Do you agree?

A little while ago I posted a video about my daily prayer walks for all the CLB North American congregations. I started these jaunts during this social distancing time as a way to kill two birds with one stone. I can get some exercise while praying. What I quickly realized was that the prayers for others helped me see everything a little more clearly. It placed my thoughts where I need them to be. In Jesus, I find my hope, my peace, and myself. I am reminded that the main good and necessity in life is unchanging... fear, love, and trust God above everything.

That pretty much sums it up: whether it’s COVID-19, or anything else that comes my way!

*Rev. Nick Mundis is Director of North American Mission for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*

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