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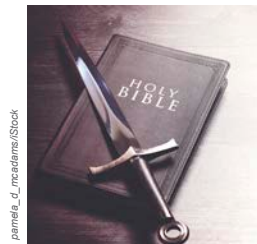
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Quiet Moments

Email prayer requests to: pray@clba.org

Divine Power

H.E. WISLØFF



God’s Word is the soul-nourishment needed for a life with God. God’s Word, therefore, is rightly called a *means of grace*. Determination and good works, prayer and wrestling against sin, will not avail. It is only God’s means of grace that can create new life and sustain that which is created. God does not expect that you can be victorious over evil except by the help of the means of grace. But if you use them rightly you will not lack anything which you need.

Man lives by every Word which comes from the mouth of God. You are not assured that you will always feel warmed and edified by the Word. You may feel that the Word condemns and humbles you. The Word is effective independent of your feelings. Use the

Word diligently. Through the Word you become a partaker of divine powers. Submerge yourself in the Word and evil will lose its power over you.

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.

Tempted by the Devil

TROY TYSDAL

On a small mountain, just west of the Jordan River, even forty days of fasting could not weaken the resolve of Jesus. He had been led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. As Jesus prayed, the words of John the Baptist played on repeat in his mind, “Look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus knew that John was prophesying of his death. In that, his mind flashed back to the Passover—the spotless lamb given in sacrifice for the children of God.

Deep in thought, Jesus looked up and out over the valley. He knew that the trip to the cross was one he would take alone, but he was not alone now. Now, he felt the presence of one he knew long ago—one who made the nations tremble, one who said in his heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God...” (Isaiah 14:13). Years ago, their paths had almost crossed in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph had fled with the child Jesus just before King Herod’s army had arrived to slaughter the children of the city. The devil had been searching for Jesus ever since, watching for another opportunity.

MATTHEW 4:3

The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God...”

In Satan’s opening line, during the Temptation of Jesus, we hear him cast doubt on the truthfulness of God’s Word. After his baptism, when Jesus emerged from the waters of the Jordan, the sky was torn open, the Spirit descended like a dove, and the Father said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). Here in the wilderness, Satan is now questioning God’s good Word. His trick is nothing new. In fact, it is as old as sin.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan appeared



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to Eve and asked, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” Satan replied, “You will not surely die...” (Genesis 3).

And there it is; the father of lies accusing God of being a liar.

It is a lie that changed the course of human history. God had given Adam and Eve all good things. How would they respond to his goodness? They would deny his Word, and death would enter the world just as God had said it would.

The voice of the tempter comes to us as well, “Has God really said that you are forgiven? Surely, you can see that you are not. Look at how the earth refuses to give up her crop. Look at how disease ravages your bodies. Look at how war destroys your kingdoms. Surely, you can see that God has forsaken you.”

Perhaps you are tempted to believe the devil. There is always a hint of truth in his lies. But then we are reminded of the very Word of God become flesh—the one

who resisted temptation, the one of whom the Psalmist declares, “... as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions” (Psalm 103:12). This forgiveness did not come without cost.

On the cross, Jesus cried out, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?”—which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Surely you know, it is for you that he was forsaken?

In Christ you have been given all good things. How will you respond to his goodness? Trust his Word, and open your ears! A day is coming when all will confess, even the devil, that Jesus Christ is Lord.

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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Man Does Not Live on Bread Alone

KAREN STENBERG

I stared out the window at the falling snow and felt the chill of January surround me. I felt angry at the cold. I felt angry that the current tides of life had picked me up, swept me along, and then dumped me off abruptly to sit in the emptiness of grief. Grief feels as if it will swallow you up and drown you with reminders of a crushing loss. I wanted relief from the pain. I wanted to run from my thoughts. I wanted to feel whole again. But nothing would bring back the baby I had lost. There was not an instant fix for my heart.

Her due date was in the warm month of May and here I sat in the cold of winter. In this moment I was angry at God, and

I wanted him to bring a quick fix, a relief from my current state of pain.

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:1-4).

Jesus was in the desert. He had not eaten for forty days, and our text simply states, “He was hungry.” I personally have

never fasted even close to that long. Even after fasting for a day I am hungry! I find myself starting to snap at my family, the irritation of my shrinking stomach and my increasing fatigue is felt physically, and it is manifested negatively on those around me. I can only imagine the physical pain and fatigue that Jesus felt after those forty days. I can imagine his intense physical need for relief from his gnawing stomach and depleted body. Into this place comes the devil to tempt him, telling Jesus to use his power to turn stones to bread. Oh, the temptation of instant relief! The tempter says, “The answer to your need is right there! Just take it!”

Jesus doesn’t take the bait. So, how

The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Matthew 4:3-4

does he answer? How does he refute the great tempter while in his physically weakened state?

He uses Scripture, quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3, which says:

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

Jesus uses Scripture to back up and emphasize the importance of *Scripture*. This is God’s Word given to us, not just a good book to admire, but something to place our trust in for our everyday lives of faith.

That day in the cold of January, I sat with my anger at God, my mind running through lists of the quick solutions the world uses to find answers. Tempted by thoughts of the worldly things that bring relief—short-lived relief, but tempting, nonetheless.

It was here that God met me. He didn’t meet me with a supernatural miracle or quick fix. He met me with whispers of Scripture, spoken to my heart. Familiar passages, reminding me of who he is. Comforting Scriptures telling me of the promises that are for me as his child. Scriptures that reinforce what a firm foundation Christ is for us.

As God brought Scripture passages and promises to my mind, I could then see clearly that I was still so loved by him. I was reminded once again that my hurt was inflicted, not by God, but by the brokenness of the world. I was promised

that God was the one who was sustaining me, bandaging my wounds, and giving me strength to carry on.

My body cried out for quick relief, but of course God knew better. He gave me what I needed, not necessarily what I wanted. Through his Word he offered me something better than quick relief. He offered me a safe place to hurt and to heal as he walked the difficult road with me. When I woke each morning with that ache in my gut, God drew me into his Word, and fed me.

In Matthew’s account of the Temptation, Jesus doesn’t use his power as God to work supernaturally. Instead he takes Scripture, something God has also given us, and Jesus shows us the importance of it in the face of temptation. He shows us the sustenance we receive from Scripture in the midst of our pain. Jesus references the Israelites wandering in the desert. As they cry out to God in their need, he sends them manna. He does take care of their physical needs, but he also shows them something more through this act. He is humbling them, showing them that they are not providing for themselves, but that God is the one caring for them and sustaining them in the wilderness. Bread only fills them temporarily. It is resting in the promised salvation that brings fulfillment. It is faith in the Lord who is supplying their needs that brings life. Jesus emphasizes that it is the Lord who feeds us with what we truly need for our souls.

Now, I wish I could say that every time I am tempted, I claim a verse and flee from sin! But let me tell you, that is far from true. There are many times I fall, many places where I fail in things

because “I know better,” and then here I find myself again. The truth is we all fail, we all stumble in small and big ways.

I don’t know what you’re going through. I don’t know what is causing you to hunger for things apart from Christ. I don’t know how you’ve failed and fallen or what weighs heavy on your heart, but what I do know is that we find our answers to our sin problem in Scripture. God’s Word points us to Christ: the one who refuted the tempter perfectly, the one who denied his flesh the pleasure of sin, and then carried our sin to the cross and paid the price so that we might live.

Christ resisted temptation and showed us a way out. We see from his example what it looks like to be fed from the presence of God and his Word. Even though he knew we would fail at this, time and time again, he gave us an answer. He made our path to freedom through the cross and the forgiveness of sins, paved with the blood of Christ.

There is a place to run, whether we are fleeing temptation or begging for forgiveness. Here in the trusted pages of the Word we find truth and forgiveness. In the Word we find food for our souls.



Karen Stenberg is Co-Director of Women’s Ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



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It is Written...

CLINT KNUTSON

The devil took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Matthew 4:5-7).

We are concerned here with the devil's misuse of God's Word, which is a rather uncomfortable subject. We are also concerned with how we can guard against that misuse. It is the mystery and mercy of God that he has revealed himself in such a creaturely way that he allows the Holy Scriptures to be subject to neglect and misuse. But he does—and praise him that he does! For we sinners can hold his holy words in our hands, we can hear them with our ears, and by them the Holy Spirit works. Through such creaturely means we are certain of life and hope.

God has given his Word in such a way that it can be misused. From this temptation of Christ, and numerous other passages, we can be quite certain that the devil and his disciples misuse the Word of God. We also see this and experience it ourselves.

The devil very subtly misuses Psalm 91 in our passage. There is no obvious twisting going on, only a subtle omission. Even according to the original context of the Psalm, it is hard to see how the devil misuses the text. Psalm 91 promises the Lord's protection. So how does Jesus see through it?

Jesus' response suggests that the devil is taking the promise that God can be trusted, and tempting Jesus to turn it into a challenge against God. A challenge by which God must prove himself. The devil is taking one passage, isolated, out of the context of Scripture, and using it for a different purpose than was intended. So, Jesus responds to the devil, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Jesus here offers a quote from Deuteronomy, recounting the

incident at Massah, in which the Israelites demanded that God prove himself. They were suspicious of God and doubted his intentions, so they challenged him. Jesus recognizes the devil wants him to doubt and test the goodness of his Father.

Jesus uses a very important phrase in response, "It is also written." Jesus refutes the devil's scheme with an understanding of God's Word that was deeper because it was broader. It was broader, in that Jesus placed the Scripture quoted by the devil within the context of the rest of Scripture. Since Jesus understood Psalm 91 within context, he realized that Psalm 91 is a psalm of faith. He also knew, by the rest of Scripture, that faith in the Lord's care is not the same thing as hurling oneself off a building to test the Lord. True faith is confidence in God's love, sovereignty, and salvation, regardless of experience, while—on the other hand—hurling oneself off a building is testing God's goodness and intentions. Because Jesus had a broad understanding of Scripture, he also knew it deeply, and he was able to counter the subtle temptation of the devil.

REV. CLINT KNUTSON, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Rev. Clint Knutson came to Lutheran Brethren Seminary from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan as a student in 2012. He serves the two-point parish of Birch Hills Community Church (Birch Hills) and Saron Lutheran Church (Hagen) while also taking PhD courses through Concordia Seminary—St. Louis. In the summer of 2022, Clint will move to Fergus Falls, MN, where he will begin a full-time role with LBS. During his first year, he will focus on completing his PhD comprehensive exams and dissertation in Doctrinal Theology, as he simultaneously begins part-time teaching duties. He will incrementally increase his LBS teaching load in the coming semesters, taking on courses in Systematic Theology and Ethics along with some in Church History and Preaching. He will assume the full load of these courses by the fall of 2025.



Clint and Heather have been married 11 years. They have four children between the ages of 7 and 1.

Most of us can hear when music is played poorly. If the music is played extremely poorly, even I can tell when things are not what they should be. But the more trained a person's ear, the more they can hear. Musician friends of mine will play, and I am in awe of their performance, and then they will talk about all the things they did wrong. I could not tell. I did not even hear the mistakes. In a way, our knowledge of Scripture works like our knowledge of music. The more we hear it, the more we study it, the more the Spirit trains our ear to the Lord's Word. The more trained our ear becomes, the more we will recognize when Scripture is misused.

Especially these days, our ears need to be trained. We are drowning in conflicting messages and information. We need to broaden our understanding of the Scriptures so that we can go deeper. To broaden our understanding I suggest two simple approaches: The first is to read Scripture *more*. The second is to read *more of* Scripture. Through these two approaches we will both broaden and deepen our understanding of God's Word.

Broadening our understanding means we need to learn what is in Scripture. To know the stories, to know the authors, to know the books. To know the focus of Scripture, which is Christ. Broader knowledge of the content and context helps to keep individual parts in perspective. We need to read Scripture more.

Secondly, broadening our understanding means reading more of Scripture. My wife always accuses me of not getting to

the point quickly enough in the passages I choose for Bible studies and sermons. As you read this article, perhaps you think she has a point. I try to read longer passages, because I want to explain what is around a verse to understand its true sense. As we saw with the devil, we can isolate a passage and then misuse it. The Bible is a big book, so we can find and isolate passages to support almost anything we want. We need to read more of Scripture when we work with it.

Growing in the Scriptures, more broadly and more deeply, is a lifelong process. As Christ's disciples, we are called to live in the Word. Such a life is made clear for us immediately in the Psalms:

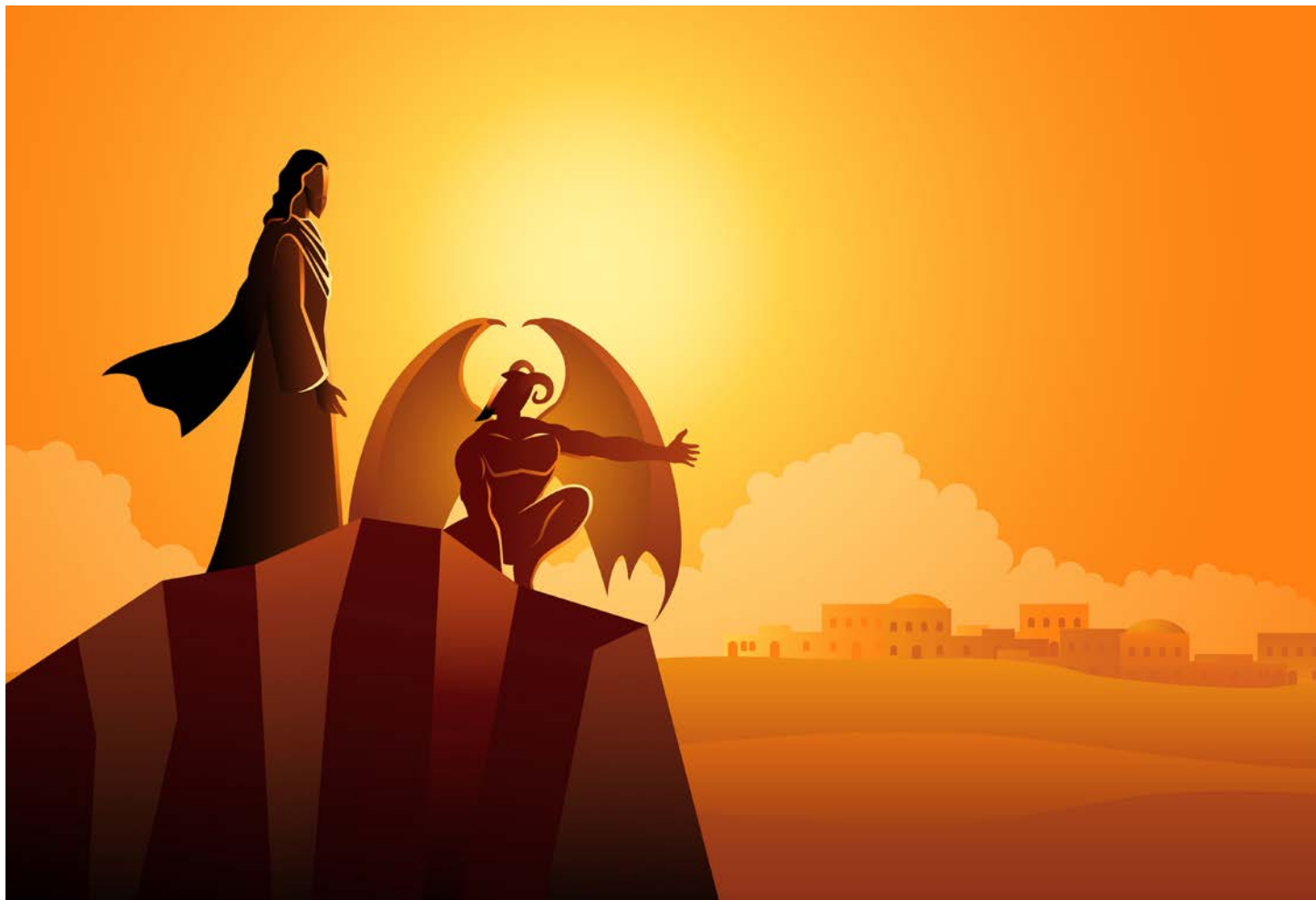
Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers (Psalm 1:1-3).

Psalm 1 describes the life of the believer. A life delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating on that law day and night. The psalms themselves then lead us in the process of meditating on God's Word. The Holy Spirit sustains us through the Word, as a tree is sustained by nearby streams of water. Through the Word he calls, enlightens, sanctifies, and preserves us. Jesus also describes the believer as a living branch connected to

the true vine, as we remain in him, and his Word remains in us (John 15:1-8). The life of the believer is lived abiding in the Word.

The Holy Spirit teaches us the music of Scripture. He trains our ears. But he does so through the mundane rhythms of the Christian life: things like your pastor's preaching, Bible studies, Sunday School, daily devotions, reading books about the Bible. It is through mundane things like prayer, the hard work of reading Scripture more, and more of Scripture, and even through suffering, that we grow in our understanding of his Word. It is a lifelong process; it is a creaturely process. It is a process to which the Holy Spirit always draws us back. The Word is the Lord's gift to us. And by broadening our understanding of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will nourish us through their depths. He will root us in Christ. He will gird us in the full armor of God, so we are able to stand against the devil's schemes (Ephesians 6:10-11). And because we will have been tuned to the Truth, we will be able to hear when the devil plays off key.

Rev. Clint Knutson serves as pastor of Birch Hills Community Church (Birch Hills, Saskatchewan) and Saron Lutheran Church (Hagen, Saskatchewan).



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All This I will Give to You

SCOTT SKONES

I'm a true crime junkie. Whether I'm on a road trip or working in the yard, there's a good chance that I'm listening to the latest episode of a podcast, soaking in all the grisly details. And one theme that surfaces often in the true crime genre is the delusion of wealth or happiness, if only the one person standing in the way can be eradicated. The motive may be an insurance policy, a secret relationship, or a coveted inheritance. People will go to great and heartbreaking lengths to find a shortcut to what their lustful hearts have been desiring.

The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the

kingdoms of the world and their glory. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:8-9).

Like an infomercial huckster, the great deceiver and adversary stands next to the One through whom and for whom all things were created (Colossians 1:15-17), offering to hand it all over immediately—if only the rightful owner and heir would worship the illegitimate and ill-fated tenant.

To be fair, Satan's claim to the kingdoms had a modicum of credibility, as Paul refers to him as "the ruler of the kingdom of the air" (Ephesians 2:2) and

"the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Because the prized created ones believed the lie and trusted the slimy words of the serpent rather than their Creator, they conceded their stewardship to the evil one who would lord it over them and their descendants.

In Matthew 4, we find ourselves on a mountain top, observing the interaction between the snake and the Seed (see Genesis 3:15). An offer is made that would shortcut the Servant's suffering and circumvent the cruel cross. Jesus receives the kingdoms and the glory that he seeks without facing the horrible road to Golgotha that lies before him.

But that wicked snake has grossly

The devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”

Matthew 4:8-10

miscalculated the very reason for Jesus’ incarnation. Jesus is wholly unlike Satan in that he isn’t at all motivated by the glory of kingdoms or prominence. He has been led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, not to find a shortcut to glory, but so that he might deliver those destined to the perpetual wilderness of sin and rebellion.

Unlike our first parents, the true and better Adam will not be tricked into a tradeoff that would supposedly save him that day of suffering, but would cost his beloved creation any chance of eternity. Undoubtedly, Jesus would have been more welcomed by his Jewish contemporaries if he had taken the bait and then ruled as any other earthly ruler. But he knew the result and, rather than even entertain the offer, responded abruptly, “Be gone, Satan!”

Unlike Adam and Eve, who believed the word of the “father of lies,” the better and final Adam clung to the Word of his Father, spoken through Moses: “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”

Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only” (Matthew 4:10).

Rather than hurriedly cutting corners or taking extreme measures, Jesus found resolve in his knowledge of the Father’s goodness. He resisted the tempter with great assurance that his inheritance was certain.

The fraudulent opportunity presented to the Son of God by the devil was woven into what has become Jesus’ most famous parable: The Parable of the Prodigal Son. The son demands now what is promised for him to receive *later*. Similar to the subjects of true crime documentaries, the

son wishes his father dead, that he might experience immediately what had been promised for later by his loving father. He wants a shortcut to glory and freedom without the long-suffering faithfulness of a rightful heir. Unlike the glory-motivated son in the parable, God’s Son was not tempted by quick riches and ill-gotten glory.

What value does that life insurance policy have, when the other shoe drops and everyone learns of the sordid shortcut to riches? What value is there in temporary gain and comfort if it means that those you love dearly are lost forever? Jesus would not have it. While Satan tried to intoxicate him with the kingdoms and their glory, Jesus’ eyes were fixed intently on Calvary, where he would suffer all for sinners’ gain.

Rather than bowing down on that mountain, assuring eternal death for those he cherished, Jesus “taste[d] death for everyone” (Hebrews 2:9) on another mountain, securing absolute victory and the assurance that all who believe will receive a full and complete inheritance as co-heirs with him (Romans 8:17).

Rather than take the shortcut to the kingdoms of the world and their glory, Jesus perfectly fulfilled his Father’s will, dying in the place of his rebellious creation, and, through his suffering, succeeded in “bringing many sons and daughters to glory...” (Hebrews 2:10).

Jesus’ kingdom is not like all the rest. There is no room for inflated egos or glory-seeking. We enter through infant-like faith, rather than through merit or success. Prominence is not achieved through climbing a ladder, but through bowing a knee. The meek are blessed and the exalted are humbled. His power is made perfect through weakness, not

upheld through brute strength. And, perhaps most beautiful of all, every right and benefit of citizenship is received rather than earned.

Jesus did not take a shortcut. He didn’t look for an easy way to gain the kingdoms and their glory. He walked the hard road. His blood purchased the forgiveness, freedom, and life of all who will believe. And, thanks be to God, his death and resurrection knocked the confident devil off that high mountain and ensured his eternal demise. His time is short (Revelation 12:12).

So we await the day when our Lord Jesus Christ will return to bring an unconditional end to both temptation and the tempter. And his glory will be complete as we join our voices with “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! (Revelation 5:13).



Pastor Scott Skones serves Living Word Fellowship in Dickinson, North Dakota. He serves on the Church of the Lutheran Brethren’s Council of Directors and is chair of the Western Region.

CLB Shared Ministry: Contribution Report

\$2,900,000

2021-22 Fiscal Year Goal

\$2,496,102

Received Through 2/28/22

The CLB Fiscal Year ends April 30, 2022.

Tempted as He was

ROY HEGGLAND

The temptations of Jesus are recorded in the Gospels not only as evidence that Jesus lived a perfect life, but also as a contrast to how we face temptations in our own strength. Christ's example instructs us when we are tempted. The temptations of Jesus were certainly unique to him because he is the Son of God. Face-to-face confrontations with Satan, being transported from place to place, and the offer of Satan's kingdom are not part of our temptation experience! Yet these run parallel to the kinds of temptation we all face as we battle the world system, satanic influences, and our own desires. We are tempted in these same areas.

First, we are tempted to do whatever it takes to provide for ourselves. Our desire for comfort and happiness will shove aside all else if we do not trust in God to care and provide for us. He promised that he would!

Second, we are also tempted to live as if Jesus redeemed us for eternity without recognizing that eternity starts the moment we become his children. He redeemed us for relationship with him, and that begins here and now, rather than someday in heaven. How we live now is important because it affects our walk with our Father.

Third, we are tempted to bring glory to ourselves rather than glorifying Jesus. It may feel good for a time to be at the top (of whatever), but it is a distraction from our mission to honor and exalt our Savior. Jesus can and will glorify us when he brings us home. If Jesus did not glorify himself (the Creator-Sustainer of all things), who are we to do for ourselves the very thing he disdained?

How do we address these temptations? Jesus did so by keeping Scripture foremost in his heart and mind. But he also knows our weakness. That is why

he encourages us with these words from 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

Praise God that he not only created us, but he also redeemed us, he continually intercedes for us, and he desires that we walk through our days in close communion with him. He desires to do the same for those who have not yet met him. Will you pray for and give to the ministries of the CLB so that others may live in relationship with the One who gave all for them?

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



Women's Ministries

Church of the Lutheran Brethren

Your generous gifts to WMCLB help support our FOCUS Project, the annual SWEET Retreat, missionary gifts, and other projects and ministry needs.

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Making Disciples for Christ

NATHANAEL S.

Jesus mentions *proselytism* only once, and it's not nice. In Matthew 23:15 (ESV), he says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves." These words stop me in my tracks. I have traveled across sea and land in hopes of seeing more people come to faith in Jesus. How do I know that my human failures are not making them children of hell?

While the Pharisees were making proselytes, Jesus was making disciples. He did so with a very simple message, the same message as John the Baptist: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!"

A proselyte has changed an opinion, has adhered to a different way of thinking—or perhaps just a different set of rituals. A disciple, however, has a new way of being. Repentance means their life has turned no less than 180 degrees and they are now *living differently*. How are they living? They are living in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus further said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to" (Matthew 23:13). How is this possible? How could they be making proselytes, but not allowing them to enter the kingdom of heaven? Jesus explains in verse 23 (ESV), "...you tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness."

Justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Jesus didn't bring a new religion; he brought a new way of being human. Not that it was new, but he was the only one who has lived it perfectly and integrally. No wonder he called himself "the Son of Man." It's a designation that originated in prophecy and basically means "The Human." The anointed king came to *be* and to *live* the kingdom that he was creating brand new in his own body. He *lived* justice, mercy, and faithfulness in his every action and word. And he was inviting others to live in this New Humanity by making disciples.



Nathanael Szobody visiting with a Bagirmi man.

His disciples weren't proselytes—they didn't change any hats or badges. They were just real people in the process of listening to Jesus and receiving his loving humanity. That process is called being a disciple.

Proselytizing is inherently manipulative. To make "the convert" is the main goal. And we have certain means of attaining that goal. I'm reminded of a homeless shelter in Detroit that offered a meal to the homeless, but only after they sat through the devotional. But Jesus healed and fed people because he had compassion for them and their human needs. He made disciples with his whole honest person and in that way opened wide the door to the kingdom of heaven.

I have a friend. He has four wives. He is the most educated and respected religious teacher in our town. He leads prayer at the mosque and judges disputes in the community. He calls me *White Teacher* and I call him *Imam*. He's gregarious and always has a story to tell, and he's not remotely interested in the Christian Scriptures that I bring. Or at least he won't show it. But he shares my humanity; he is a person in process. So, I can open the door of the kingdom to him in the way I live and speak.

I learn from Jesus that the invitation into the kingdom of heaven is always open, always explicit, and always free. It's open because Jesus' resurrection is for the life of the whole world. It's explicit because communication is part of being human: Jesus is the Word. And it's free because Jesus' death excludes any other price. As a missionary, my job is sometimes just to get out of the way!

We have started several projects in Chad: a Bible Story project, famine relief for war refugees, Bible translation, a cattle project, and a new elementary school in our village. In each of these projects we end up handing the management to our Chadian brothers and sisters. We are learning to walk alongside these Chadian believers as fellow humans growing in justice, mercy, and faithfulness, so that they become compassionate refugee aid workers, schoolteachers, Bible translators, and evangelists. As we do this, the message of Jesus rings constantly in our ears: "Repent of your proselytizing, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Nathanael S. serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as a missionary in Chad, Africa.



2022 Biennial Convention
DISCIPLE-MAKING CHURCH
 Fergus Falls, MN **June 11-14**
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CHRIS PRIESTAF



PAUL LARSON



GREG ANDERSON



BRANDON PANGMAN

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PARTNER

SUNDAY — JUNE 12

UNLEASH

MONDAY AM — JUNE 13

MULTIPLY

MONDAY PM — JUNE 13

Day of Equipping

Join us as we welcome author and theologian Greg Finke. Greg will lead us in a *Day of Equipping*. We will learn to craft a personal plan and a structure for ongoing support and accountability as we join Jesus in his Mission.

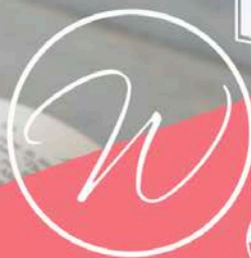
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BIENNIAL '22

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IN THE WORD, IN LIFE, IN MISSION



Pres. Paul Larson

President Paul Larson was raised in the faith at Elim Lutheran Brethren Church in Clearbrook, MN. He has served CLB congregations in MT, CO, CA, and WI in youth ministry, church planting, and as pastor. He is blessed to be husband to Bee; and father to Gabe (Mikelle), Gracia, Nick (Tessa), Karina, and Nate (Julia). On December 23, 2021, he welcomed his first grandchild (Eleanor), and is eagerly awaiting the arrival of a second in early 2022. He has served as CLB President since 2014.

Presidential Candidates THE INTERVIEW

PART TWO



Dr. Ryan Nilsen

Greetings, CLB family! It is the honor of a lifetime to have received this nomination from the Council of Directors to serve you as a candidate for President. I'm a fourth-generation member of this movement. My faith and life have been shaped by the people of the CLB. I'm looking forward to sharing my vision for the CLB in future communications like this, and to hearing your thoughts and dreams for our Church body. I seek to be a servant of the Church and I am excited to be a choice for this role in God's work. Please pray that, as we consider together where the Lord is leading the CLB, he will guide us in our dialogue now, as well as in our voting this summer.



What is your vision for the CLB as a disciple-making movement?

REV. PAUL LARSON

I believe the Church of the Lutheran Brethren has a gift, and with it a humble calling as expectant stewards of it. We have a gracious gospel *truth* by which we are saved and in which we rest; and we hear an expectant and restless *call* to be joined to God's mission in bringing that gospel of Christ to our neighbors near and among the nations. We follow Christ with a solitary focus and a solidarity of purpose: to be and to make his disciples.



In answer to the question regarding my vision for the CLB being and becoming more a disciple-making Church, I hesitate in caution, knowing an incumbent's answer can soon devolve to defense or boast or campaigning. I desire to avoid this. Incumbency also carries its own humility. This said, I

REV. RYAN NILSEN

The focus of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren should be to serve and support the disciple-making mission of our local churches. I believe God is calling us to re-examine and adapt how the synod serves the churches of the CLB in their efforts to make disciples in a rapidly changing mission field. Time is of the essence, but we can navigate these changes if we work together.



We call ourselves a disciple-making movement, but this is still an aspirational vision. Someone once said that a denomination can't start a movement, but it can serve one. We need to shift our attention from trying to start or direct this movement from our headquarters, and instead serve and resource the grassroots

am honored to serve the CLB, and hold a vision of her as a disciple-making Church. This vision has been renewed and formed collaboratively by the departmental directors of the CLB Mission Team, the CLB Council of Directors, and myself.

For the last five years this vision has been the central guiding *preferable future* we believe God is leading us toward in stewardship of his gifts and calling, and has been the foundation for our core priorities, decisions, and shifts in personnel, strategy, and resources. It was this vision that guided our leadership over the last several years as we reconstituted our Finance department, restaffed our North American Mission team to a church planting and vitality priority, shifted responsibilities in the CLB Office of the President, supplemented the energies of our Communication department, and re-summoned our International Mission department and Lutheran Brethren Seminary toward the focus of this vision. Departments and their team members have been called to support and advance this vision in departmental strategic plans and priorities.



For the past year, the CLB Mission Team and I, with the review and input of numerous congregational leaders, and the affirmation of our Council of Directors, have formed *four senior objectives* of a Mission Advancement Initiative called “Disciple-Making Church” that will give shape to CLB ministries and strategies for the foreseeable future:

Call to Follow

We are a people called, shaped, and sent under the Word. We must hear this Word again to repent, trust, and follow Christ in sacrificially loving, serving, reconciling, and connecting our neighbors with Jesus, his community, and his mission.

Under the Word. We are not postured above the Word, as its examiners and extractors, but just the opposite. This vision means we must value, nurture, and perpetuate the ministry of God’s Word among us—again. Familiar and fresh means and platforms must be utilized as we seek what only the Word can do in calling, shaping, and sending Jesus’ disciples. As we approach the suffering and lostness of our neighbors, it will be the Word that moves both them and us to repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. As a disciple-making movement, this will mark us unique. Primarily, our discipleship is not rooted in methodology nor obedience of practice, but it is ever always a work of God’s Word.

Partner in Mission

Foster the interdependence of individuals, congregations, regions, and synod in disciple making and in achieving these objectives.

I believe the needle has moved. Through the crucible of the Church during the pandemic, we have advanced significantly

passion for disciple making already emerging from our congregations. When many of us are personally involved with disciple making, and when our disciples are making disciples, then we will have a movement.

The synod exists to connect churches with the greater mission, which includes international missions, church planting, and meeting the needs of our local churches—which is where disciple making happens. The synod is meant to serve the local church, but when we get that backward, we invite discord and lose sight of God’s mission. I want to see our churches regard the synod more as an equipping association and less as a denomination.



Here is my vision for our disciple-making mission and a summary of how we could fulfill it:

1) Strengthen Established Churches: Invest resources into our established churches to help them make disciples and engage their local mission fields. If the Lord wills it, we could work closely with every CLB church within a decade.

- Work with ten churches per year in the development of new discipleship ministry or church vitality.
- Equip churches to train laypeople to lead Bible studies, small groups, and discipleship groups so that there are three or more “generations” of disciples in every church.
- Provide resources, facilitate leadership development, and help churches discover new ministry pathways.
- Train twenty pastors in leading disciple making every year through learning cohorts.

2) Start New Churches: Coordinate our efforts in making disciples and starting new churches in North America and around the globe. If the Lord wills it, we could plant 100 new churches in North America over the next thirty years. This would allow us to double the number of missionaries serving unreached people groups around the world. We should continue increasing our church planting so that, within a decade, we are consistently planting three or more churches per year.

3) Empower Young Leaders: Identify, equip, and empower young leaders. We need to encourage these men and women to lead new disciple-making ministries and join in regional and national leadership roles.

- Mentor young adults in discipling relationships.
- Establish a new Bible school and/or gap-year program.
- Develop additional pathways beyond the traditional MDiv. for pastoral ministry preparation, and train laypeople in our theology and practical ministry skills.
- Uphold our existing schools and camps.
- Involve young adults in the leadership of our church plants, established churches, and the denomination itself.

in our abilities to create and share resources, and also in our inclination to receive and utilize them. The identity and energies of the local congregation understandably are often encompassed by the local ministry context. I believe we are at a time when we must explore and accentuate how we might be better postured to know our identity and engage in ministry partnership with a broader part of our Church. One example of this is the systems resource called *The Forge*, which was formed out of this vision. We are stronger and better together.

Unleash New Leaders

Call, empower, and support young men and women to lead in making disciples and forming disciple-making communities.

It is our vision to take greater initiative to welcome and summon young women and men as developing leaders among us, to affirm their vision and gifts, to open seats at the table of dialogue and mission, and everywhere possible to seek to raise up and unleash new leaders among us.

Within this vision, there are several models currently under consideration. Among them, gap-year ministries or local congregation internships. Also being considered is a possible new form of Bible school that would be lithe and scalable, and perhaps reproducible in multiple locations. Another variant being discussed is the model of discipleship houses in CLB university communities. It is also part of this vision that a leader and networker of this vision to unleash young adult leaders may be sought and called.

Multiply New Disciples

Mobilize our people and our congregations to disciple neighbors near and among the nations so new churches are planted and established congregations are revitalized.

We have prioritized and changed our staffing and strategic paradigm to advance congregational vitality and church planting. In addition to resources already functioning in support of this vision—*The Forge*, LBDI, Pastors Network, *Forge* podcasts, NAM pastor cohorts, and ministry specialization networks—we are also developing a model for congregational coaching and support, utilizing NAM staff and leading disciple-making pastors.

My vision for this has collaborated with and supports the intended pace and target of our NAM and LBIM departments in planting disciple-making congregations, and in sending disciple-making church planters to the unreached people groups engaged by our LBIM.

When the first disciples heard John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus, they followed him. "Come and see... Follow me," Jesus called. And they did. When one congregational leader heard these four objectives (Call, Partner, Unleash, Multiply), he said, "It sounds like what Jesus did." True. These are only what Jesus does and ultimately can do. It is our vision to follow after Jesus in making others his followers.

4) Reach New People and New Places: While we continue to go to unreached places around the world, we need to go into the hard places in North America. We need to start multi-ethnic and minority churches to reflect the mosaic of our mission field. I'm excited for the day when we've translated our *Explanation of Luther's Small Catechism* into Spanish and other languages.

5) Shift the way the synod staff team serves our churches: While churches serve in ever-changing mission fields, the denominational ministry created to serve them changes at a slower pace. We need to regularly evaluate and adapt how we can work together effectively.

- Engage more people across the CLB in the leadership of our denomination.
- Merge some departments in order to increase synod staff supporting frontline ministry, including creating a staff position to catalyze disciple making.
- Decrease synod staff representation and increase pastor/elder representation on the Theological Council.
- Focus the role of president on leading the synod team, communicating with the denomination, and spending time with congregations to help with strategic vision planning and equipping them for disciple making. The president would serve as an equipper and visionary for disciple making, personally mentoring disciples and training others to train and coach disciple makers—in other words be a "sleeves-rolled-up" president.
- Expect all synod staff to be personally involved in disciple making.
- Work closely with the Council of Directors (COD) to ensure that their vision, priorities, and values are guiding the strategy of the CLB's ministry.

6) Maintain our theology and message while we change how we express it: We need to use tools and ministries that will be effective today, but our message, our beliefs, and our dependence on Christ must not change.

- Keep the various arms of the CLB in balance. I believe that our Church body consists of at least three groups: 1) those who identify strongly with orthodox Lutheranism, the Lutheran confessions and view of sacraments; 2) those who uphold the expression of living faith in line with our pietistic roots; and 3) those who hold to the outward focus of an evangelistic body. I love this diversity and believe it is one of our strengths. However, sometimes one of these groups exerts more influence than others, impacting our theology and polity in a way that weakens our ability to work in harmony. I believe that we need to resist narrowing our doctrine, so that we do not exclude any of these groups.
- Engage in conversations about cultural issues from a discipleship-oriented perspective so that we better understand those we are called to reach with the gospel.

God is at work all around us and he is calling us to be a part of his mission. I look forward to serving the Lord together with you as missionary disciples in our backyards and around the globe!



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Fear and Love of God

DAVID ELLIS

Jesus really loves kids! In fact, he tells us to be like them. What a blessing it is to see the “simple” faith of a child! God’s plan is for us to share our faith with them and then learn from them as we see that faith take hold.

God’s design is for the family to be the primary disciple-making context, with each family raising their children to know that they are loved by God and a part of his eternal family through the gospel. This is God’s strategy, with the broader church body supporting this through corporate worship, Sunday school, and other congregational ministries.

As parents, grandparents, or simply people who love kids, we want our children to encounter the living God. Our God wants us to help each generation know him in all his power, grace, and truth. A wonderful way for children to understand their place in God’s family is for them to be taught this, day in and day out, through life’s experiences with their earthly family.

Dave Ellis is a father, grandfather, teacher, “Creation Celebrator,” and

disciple maker. He has done this with his family and now he can help you have “faith talks” with the kids you love, as you consider God’s creation with them. The sun, moon, stars, and all of nature cry out that there is a loving Creator. Check out Dave’s blog or his new book at: www.creatorwords.com.

*Nick Mundis, Director
North American Mission*

We need one of these daily. What is it, you wonder? Call it a course correction, a life’s path redirect. Why are you and I graciously given life on this big blue planet? Luther said it plainly in the catechism: We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things. But it’s easy to get distracted. We have an enemy who continually creates lies to pull us away from fear and love of God. Our enemy wins when we are diverted from our relationship with the Father.

Retired teachers still give assignments. This is your course correction assignment—and mine. The old teacher

will do it with you. There is no due date, discussion, test—just the assignment. Here it is in two parts: 1) to fear and love God; and 2) you must do it outside. We read God’s Word in order to fear and love him. We can also use his creation to learn to fear and love him.

It’s not my idea. Paul the Apostle wrote the words we’ll use to begin this adventure with God’s creation. Romans 1:19 tells us that “what may be known about God is plain.” In verse 20 he writes that we can actually see God’s invisible qualities—his “eternal power and divine nature.” Did you catch that? *See* what’s invisible? We can see God’s power and divine nature! What is God’s divine nature? It’s love!

God spoke directly to Job when his life was at its lowest. What did God use to pull Job out of despair? He said to Job, “Listen to this, Job; stop and consider (my) wonders” (37:14). This is our first task: consider God’s wonders. How might we do that, you ask? Again, the Bible provides us with instruction. God directs us to “be still, and know that I am God”



The Adventures of Boone

Growing up with normal stubborn behavior and disobedience, Boone needs help – a “rescue.” He needs time outside. The power of God can be clearly seen. With guidance from his parents, Boone begins to find his own “power checks.” As he spends time outside, he is taught to look for the power and divine nature of God. It can be found by anyone who spends time outside.

Available at: creatorwords.com/store

(Psalm 46:10). Go outside, on a warm day or cold, and the impact is the same. Be still. Still. With our mouths closed, eyes open, ears attentive to outside sounds... that still. What is God’s promise? We will know he is God.

Jesus directed us to “consider the ravens” (Luke 12:24). This is the second time the word *consider* has been used in relation to what God has made. To consider requires us to take time. Reflection should bring us to a life full stop. The Bible instructs us to study the wonders of God, to think through to the conclusion: God made all my eyes can see. Then while we are sitting still, you and I can do one of my favorite things. Look at the sky. The psalmist urges us to look up: “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1).

Take walks... in pleasant weather and when it’s inclement. As you walk, examine the earth God has made. It is “filled with love.” God’s love. Look around, listen, take in the scents of earth, touch the grass. The earth is filled with God’s love. Become a student of the

animals God has put on the earth. He saved them from the flood. He has put in them his Creator stamp: made by God.

In Jeremiah 8:7 we read, “Even the stork knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration.” Forty percent of the world’s bird population migrate, and there are two migrations annually. God provides us with multiple opportunities to observe this God-designed miracle. These words from Job 12:7 summarize what God “makes plain” to us: “Ask the animals, and they will teach you...” The best place to “ask” the animals? Outside.

Believe it. Paul writes that creation reveals the invisible qualities of God. Creation makes visible the forever power of God. Creation reveals God’s divine nature. His love. Exploring these truths is a life adventure. It is the clear intention of God that we learn to know and fear him through what he has made. Why do we have five senses? They are never fully used indoors.

An unexpected reward to spending time observing and considering creation

is health. Our immune system is strengthened, muscle tone improves, our pulse rate slows, and stress is reduced... simply by spending time outside. The most profitable reward is a more complete understanding of Scripture. God has filled the Bible with creation examples. Remember the life assignment? “The heavens declare the glory of God.” The comforting words of Jesus admonish us to *consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field* (Matthew 6:26-30).

Would it be worthwhile to fear and love God?

Examine his creation—outside. He is everywhere present.

David Ellis was an elementary teacher for over forty years and served as an instructional systems specialist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Tribute to a Suffering Servant

DAN MALMSTROM

This letter pays tribute to a late pastor and community leader who was less concerned that people go to church simply to hear sermons, than he was that people know Christ. He challenged his congregation to “be the church by serving others generously.”

It's common in our rural community to hear the question, “So, where do you go to church?” The resulting conversation likely includes the proper name of a physical church and maybe a denomination.

Kevin Foss and his family moved to Battle Lake, Minnesota in 2014. In some ways Kevin was an outlier. It took courage for an avid New York Yankees and Giants fan with deep roots (and a Hillcrest Academy alumnus) to move into the heart of Twins, Vikings, and Battler territory. Yet Kevin quickly became endeared as he and Debi lived a beautiful reflection of Christ's virtues that influenced many in our community.

While helping to plant Bethel in Battle Lake, Kevin was diagnosed with melanoma cancer. It ravaged his body over five years, inflicting multiple surgeries, chemo, radiation, and countless therapies and hospitalizations. Yet his faith and spirit would not be dampened.

Kevin's tireless service through suffering is perhaps the most notable element of his time in Battle Lake. For many people, service, compassion, and generosity follow naturally from their achievements, abundance, and contentment. We see it often in our culture when people “achieve success” or “make it” by the world's standards, and *then* their life of service and generosity begins. In contrast, Kevin's life in Battle Lake might be regarded as disheartening in human terms—sanctioned to a terminal sentence of daily suffering and pain. Yet he responded with a faith that exuded love for every person, a perpetual smile, and selfless serving, when it was anything but convenient or painless for him to serve. In doing so, Kevin became greatly loved and admired by the people around the area.

It was not uncommon to hear someone ask how Kevin was doing after yet another serious cancer setback. It was also not uncommon to hear others wonder aloud, “How long must Kevin suffer?” In his distress, Kevin's example of serving others



Rev. Kevin Foss giving a children's message at Bethel LC in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

could only be explained by unadulterated godly virtue. Although he suffered greatly, we believe Kevin's time in Battle Lake was God's perfect timing!

He quietly defined “church” for us as going into the community rather than going to a church building. A church was people, who would clean our local parks and beaches, clean up at the school in the spring, sponsor the Wenonga Days bounce house for any and every kid, provide Christmas Day meals for the needy and a Thanksgiving outpouring, hold sports camps in the summer, present a vibrant youth group even during COVID, offer worship at the community dock, support the Child Care Center, and the list goes on and on.

There are many great books about servant leadership, yet none better than the biblical account of Christ, portrayed as the greatest suffering-servant.

Considering Kevin's time in Battle Lake, it is remarkable to realize how Bethel has grown, how people's lives have changed, and how our culture of collaboration has been enhanced. All this influenced and inspired by a man of humble words, stricken with constant pain, against the backdrop of distancing from one another we felt due to COVID-19.

James, the half-brother of Christ, tells us, “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing” (1:2-4, NLT).

Even while Kevin suffered, his faith was unwavering, and his smile was persistent in great joy. He prevailed as he matured in godliness.

Kevin's brother Dave Foss—also a pastor—recently reflected on Kevin's passing: “From now on when people ask me how Kevin is doing, I can respond with assurance and say, ‘He's never been better!’”

We are better too, Kevin. Praise God, and thank you!

Dan Malmstrom is an accomplished global tech and biotechnology executive, writer, and executive mentor. He and his wife Lisa reside in Battle Lake, Minnesota where they teach Bible Studies to young adults in their home, participate in community service, and serve on various corporate and non-profit boards.

Well Done, Faithful Servant

Rev. Kevin Foss, 54, of Battle Lake, MN died Sunday, January 16, 2022 at his residence after a long battle with cancer. Kevin Scott Foss was born February 16, 1967 to E. Thor and Lillian (Tjornhom) Foss in Fergus Falls, MN. In his early years he lived in Great Falls, MT; Huntington, NY and then Cranston, RI where he attended elementary, junior high, and high school. He graduated from Hillcrest Lutheran Academy in 1985. He attended Houghton College (Houghton, NY) but then graduated from Taylor University (Upland, IN) in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. He graduated from the Lutheran Brethren Seminary in 1997 with a Master of Divinity.

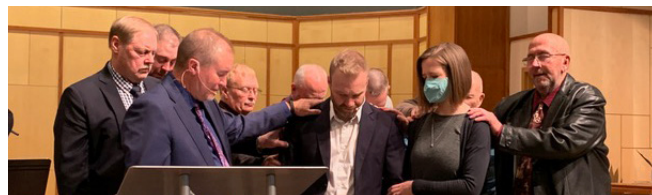


On June 24, 1995 Kevin married Debi Christenson at Bethel Church in Fergus Falls.

Kevin had a lot of different jobs throughout his life including several summers at Tuscarora Inn & Conference Center with his favorite task, driving the boat. He even worked as a security guard at one point. Prior to attending Seminary, Kevin served as the Youth Director at 59th Street Church in Brooklyn, NY. While in seminary, he served as a Youth Director at Peace Methodist Church as well as Calvary Free Lutheran. At Hillcrest he served as a boarding boss and on the Resident Life Staff. Following seminary, Kevin served Oak Hill Church in Bloomington, MN from July 1997 to January 2003; Peace Christian Church in Bohemia, NY from January 2003 until December 2014; Bethel Lutheran Church – Battle Lake Campus from December 2014 until his passing.

Kevin always used his voice to speak words of truth and kindness, his ears to listen for understanding, his hands to reach out to someone who had fallen, and his mind to share the wonders of the gospel. He had an ever-tender heart to love the people that Jesus loved.

Spina Installed



L to R (Front Row): President Paul Larson, Rev. Jordan Spina, Becca Spina. Back Row: Elders Arne Lynne, Jonas Nelson, John Jermiason, Pastor Pete Pederson, Elders Brent Helseth, Scott Knutson, Dick Pederson, and Dave Frothum.

On November 21, 2021, Rev. Jordan Spina was installed as the teaching pastor at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Brethren Church in Minot, North Dakota. Pres. Paul Larson officiated.

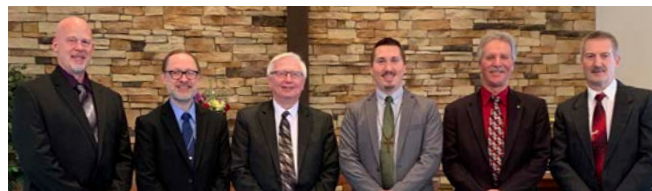
Kiefert Promoted to Major



L to R: Chaplain Brian Kiefert and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren's Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces, Chaplain, Colonel Michael Heuer, USAF (Retired).

On November 24, 2021, Chaplain Brian Kiefert was promoted from Captain to Major at the Army National Guard Professional Education Center located at Camp Robinson in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Retired United States Air Force Chaplain, Colonel Michael Heuer, represented the Church of the Lutheran Brethren at the ceremony.

Edwards Ordained



L to R: Elder Brian Watts, Rev. Michael Edwards, Dr. Eugene Boe, Pastor Marc Sperlich, Elders Dennis Kantz and Klaus Sperlich.

On January 30, 2022, Pastor Michael Edwards was ordained at Good News Lutheran Brethren Church in McAlisterville, Pennsylvania. Dr. Eugene Boe officiated.

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No Trouble with Demons

Jesus seemed to have no trouble with demons. Read through the four Gospels, and you will see how commonplace it was for Jesus to encounter and cast out demons. In the Gospels (NIV translation) there are 86 mentions of demons, counting also “impure spirits”—as they are often called. In every encounter with a demon-possessed person, Jesus effortlessly cast out the demons, apparently sending them into the Abyss, so that they troubled people no more. Even a Legion of demons was no challenge for him.

Jesus’ human opponents once claimed his power over demons to be Satanic. In response, Jesus spoke truth: “...if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house” (Mark 3:26-27). Jesus is the one who ties up the strong man. This is proven every time a demon is cast out, and every time a sinner is set free to new life in Christ. Good is good, evil is evil, and God is always good.

If overcoming evil demons is so easy for Jesus, why then does his face-to-face encounter with Satan, in the Temptation, have a very different feel? Is it that Satan’s power is so much greater than that of rank-and-file demons? Has Jesus finally met his match in the prince of demons? No! Something else must be happening in the Temptation of Christ. What is it?

We know that Jesus, to accomplish his redemptive mission on earth, had to be both True God and True Man. Our catechism says, “It was necessary for our Savior to be True Man in order that he might fulfill the law for us, and suffer and die in our place.” Then it quotes Romans 5:19, “for just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” Satan’s temptation of Christ was part of Jesus’ successful obedience in the realm where we who are born sinners have failed.

But Jesus also faced that tempter with the very same weapons that we frail followers of Christ have at our disposal today. First, he was led into his temptation by the Spirit of God. I don’t know that the Spirit leads us *into* temptation today, but this same Holy Spirit may lead us *out of* our temptations—if we will listen, and respond to him in obedience. And second, the Word of God, wielded so brilliantly by Christ, is the same sword given you and me. Jesus spoke truth, and so may we.

Stronger than the strong man, Jesus can plunder the strong man’s house—that is, deliver us poor sinners from the power of sin, death, and the devil, and carry us into his own kingdom.

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