Faith & Fellowship

Vol. 84, No. 1

January/February 2017

Here I Stand

500 1517-2017 Reformation

CLB

www.CLBA.org

4 **Against the Church?**
Daniel Berge

6 **Public Theology**
Ben Hosch

8 **A Beggar Before God**
Lukas Kjolhaug

10 CLB Focus
ROY HEGGLAND

11 **Resolved: To Study the Bible**
Cheryl Olsen

12 **A Remnant in Pasadena**
Phil Heiser

14 **The River**
Harold Rust

16 **Look Up!**
James Jensen

18 **LBS J-Term Schedule**
The Reformation and its Application for Today

19 **CLB News**

20 **re:Think**
Brent Juliot

Praying hands/BrianAJackson/iStock

Public Speaker/g-stockstudio/iStock

Empty bowl/theevening/iStock

FAITH & FELLOWSHIP
Volume 84 - Number 1

Editor In Chief/ Graphic Designer: Troy Tysdal
ttysdal@clba.org

Contributing Editor: Brent Juliot
bjuliot@clba.org

Copy Editor: Aaron Juliot
ajuliot@clba.org

Cover Photo:
Martin Luther/vaximilian/iStock

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Quiet Moments

Email prayer requests to: pray@prayclb.org

Heaven Opened

MARTIN LUTHER

Old Holy Bible/aurorat/iStock

When I was a monk, I didn't accomplish anything through fasting and prayer. This is because neither I nor any of the other monks acknowledged our sin and lack of reverence for God. We didn't understand original sin, and we didn't realize that unbelief is also sin. We believed and taught that no matter what people do, they can never be certain of God's kindness and mercy. As a result, the more I ran after and looked for Christ, the more he eluded me.

When I realized that it was only through God's grace that I would be enlightened and receive eternal life, I worked diligently to understand what Paul said in Romans 1:17—the righteousness of God is revealed. I searched a long time and tried to understand it again and again. All the teachers except Augustine interpreted God's righteousness as God's anger. So every time I read it, I wished that God had never revealed the gospel. Who could love a God who is angry and who judges and condemns us?

Finally, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I took a closer look at what the prophet Habakkuk said: "The righteous person will live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). From this I concluded that life must come from faith. I therefore took the abstract to the concrete level. I related the concept of righteousness to a person becoming righteous. In other words, a person becomes righteous by faith. That opened the whole Bible—even heaven itself—to me!

Dr. Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 and died on February 18, 1546 at the age of 62. He was Doctor of Bible at the University of Wittenberg.

Luther, Martin, By Faith Alone. *Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1998.*

A Beautiful Swan

TROY TYSDAL

On July 6, 1415 the Bohemian priest Jan Hus was unceremoniously stripped of his vestments and condemned to die for heresy against the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. Hus had advocated for morality amongst clergy, that the Scriptures be translated and taught in the common tongue, and that peace of mind could not be earned or purchased with good deeds or money. He believed that the Church was not the pope or the clergy but instead it was the gathering of the elect—those with faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

As the authorities led Jan Hus to the site of his execution, a stake where he would be bound and set ablaze, he was mocked and ridiculed. His last name meant *goose* in Bohemian... so it isn't hard to imagine the clever insults that came his way as his executioners prepared to roast him alive.

As Jan prepared to die, tradition tells us that he prayed for those who persecuted him, and then he uttered these prophetic words, "You can kill the goose, but one day soon a swan will come that no one will be able to silence."

Swan reflections/Joss/iStock

MATTHEW 10:27-31

Jesus said, "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther made his way toward the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany with his famed *95 Theses* in hand. In the eyes of humankind, the monk looked nothing like a swan, in fact the Pope would later call him a wild boar. But Luther was uncompromising, and as Jan Hus had prophesied, he would prove to be impossible to silence. As Luther nailed his protest to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg he set in motion a chain of events that would divide an empire and threaten his very life.

Luther's belief that sinners are justified by faith *alone* in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins put him on a collision course with two of the most powerful men in the world, Pope Leo X and the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V.

Was Luther afraid?

He certainly was, but he feared God more than man... and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). Luther knew that God was his judge, and his confidence came not from himself but from his faith that Jesus Christ had paid for his sins in full.

As believers in Christ we sometimes find ourselves at odds with the world... and the authorities that govern the world. It's not because we are contentious or looking for trouble, but because, by faith, we belong to something greater. By faith we belong to the Kingdom of God and our very purpose in this world is to be witnesses to the Word of God. We are here to speak truth in love—truth about sin and truth about forgiveness. We are here to stand boldly against the enemies of God, wise as serpents and gentle as doves: that they might be won to faith in Jesus Christ.

The world may tell us that our faith is intolerant and unfair, that the truth we cling to is hateful and ugly. But the world is not our judge. God is our judge, and he looks upon his elect—those with faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins—as if we were white as swans, pure as Christ.

Whatever power comes against you, whatever trial threatens to kill your body but cannot kill your soul, stand firm, and know this: those who stand in Christ never stand alone.

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.*

Visit the CLB online at: www.CLBA.org

Here I Stand
Against the Church?

DANIEL BERGE

Martin Luther At The Diet Of Worms In 1521/traveler1116/iStock

"Unless I am convinced by the teachings of Holy Scripture or by sound reasoning… I am tied by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against my conscience is neither safe nor right. Here I stand. God help me! Amen."

As Luther uttered these tortuously thought-out words, he had to have been wondering whether they might be his last. Already branded a heretic, Luther made his way to the Diet (assembly) at Worms in the spring of 1521 to stand before Charles V, the new Holy Roman Emperor.

At his coronation, Charles V pledged to "preserve the ancient Christian faith" and to "protect the Roman Catholic Church." Luther—already excommunicated by that Church—pled for God's help as he stood on the Word of God, against the Church, before the Church's anointed protector (and, quite possibly, the most powerful man in the world).

The scene couldn't be more dramatic, and the story couldn't fit better with contemporary ideology.

We've always had a "rebellious" streak, but today's culture has trumped any previous revolutionary thinking. If there's one thing that's celebrated today, it's the undoing of "the established." If anything seems wrong today, it is whatever has been the majority position of the past. Luther stood against the established Church, and that rebellious stand on his "minority" position is just the kind of story our culture feeds on.

While it's good to celebrate the courage of Luther, this example has some potentially unhealthy applications in today's context. Fed by our anti-establishment culture, we might see Luther's stand as an example of why it's okay for us to go our own way. However, that thinking might be too quick to join Luther in his rebellion against the Church, rather than join him in his position in the Church, with the Church, for the Church, under the Word of God.

In the Church

When Luther found problems within the Church of his day he did something that would be odd to today's culture: *he stayed in the Church*.

"But isn't 'the Church' just the house of 'religion'? Isn't it just one of mankind's traditions, an established vestige of a former time? Isn't true spirituality found outside the Church, in yourself?"

Too many people today think in ways close to this. When a problem is "sniffed out" in their church, they're quick to go their own way. Despite the treasure we have in our freedom to gather and worship together, many go their own way seeking "spiritual food" in things like nature, music, or private meditation.

Luther would have none of this.

In Luther's famed 95 Theses, he set out problems he saw in the Church, so that they might be discussed *in the Church*. When Luther ran into problems with the Pope, he asked that there might be a great Church Council to discuss these issues *in the Church*. When he was accused as a heretic, he invited his accusers to open the Word and show him where he was wrong, again inviting discussion *in the Church*.

Christianity is never an isolated faith, but a faith lived in community, centered on the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Luther didn't want to come up with his own views on God or develop his own spirituality; he wanted to work in the Church to best understand what God has revealed in Scripture.

Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms in 1521.

Luther stood against the Church—but still in the Church, under the Word of God.

With the Church

In our context, independence of thought is often vaulted into a treasured place. People are proud of their own private interpretation of Scripture, and don't mind trumping traditional teaching with "what it means to me." But for Luther, his rebellion was not a rebellion of novelty, but a reformation call to the Church to examine the Word together.

Luther's deep studies engaged not only his contemporaries but also the Church Fathers before him. While he had no shortage of quotes that argued against various Church Fathers, Luther was consistently cognizant of what others in the Church have had to say. His writings are full of references to various Church Fathers, and he argued that both their writings and his own should serve to point people back to Scripture.

His stand against the Church was not one he made in isolation or novelty of thought, but it was made in conversation with the many in his local church, and all those who had gone before him.

Luther stood against the Church, but still with the Church, under the Word of God.

For the Church

This is the key for Luther. He didn't just find a problem with the Church and try to do things his own way. Luther stood against the Church because it had lost its foundation on the Word of God and its focus on the gospel (what God has done for us in Jesus Christ). In the face of this loss, Luther could do nothing but point people to God's Word and to faith in Jesus Christ.

Luther recognized that—since people might err—we all must come under God's Word to be enlightened by what is outside of us (not what's inside of us). This is why Luther said "the greatest and principal purpose of every church service is to preach and teach God's Word."[1] We do not know God's Word in ourselves or by ourselves, but it comes to us from outside ourselves. Nature's beauty, powerful music, or inner thoughts will never be a substitute for coming under the regular preaching and teaching of God's Word, for the Church's own good.

Furthermore, Luther knew the Church desperately needs to know that our salvation must lie outside of us—in Jesus Christ's completed work—or we will never be able to stand before God. Luther sought to extend that truth *for the Church*. His stand against the Church was constantly directed to the care of souls under the gospel, and not taken up with prideful, individualistic intentions.

Because the Church is a refuge for sinners, we know errors will continue to seep into the Church. In the face of strong errors, we may need to take a stand against the Church, much as Luther did. But, as Luther showed, our stand should be in the Church, with the Church, and for the Church, under the Word of God.

Dr. Daniel Berge Ph.D. serves as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Brethren Church in Eugene, Oregon.

Sources

1. *What Luther Says*, (ed., Ewald M. Plass, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959 [citing WA 19, 78; English from A. Steimle in *Works of Martin Luther* {VI, 170ff.}]).

Microphone with Crowd/uschools/iStock

Here I Stand

Public Theology

BEN HOSCH

The phrase *public theology* is one I have seen quite often lately. Now, to those of us who live in the Western world, such a phrase seems like an oxymoron. We've been told that religion and spirituality are private things, that there is a split between the sacred and secular and never shall the two meet. What, then, does it mean to have a public theology? It is having a confession to make, living in light of Martin Luther's statement: "Here I stand." As Lutherans, public theology should not be a foreign concept to us. Confessions are part and parcel to our heritage. And one of our confessions embodies the nature of public theology more than the others.

On January 21, 1530, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V issued an edict that a diet—a formal general assembly of the princes or estates of the Empire—be held April 8 in the city of Augsburg to address the commotion caused by the Lutheran Reformers. As German states continued to catch the Reformation fever, Charles needed to deal with the issue once and for all. As the Ottoman Empire continued to charge its way into Europe, Charles needed a unified Germany to keep the Turks at bay. The call for the Diet of Augsburg was sent out as a congenial call to Christian unity for the sake of the unity of Europe itself.

This proclamation reached Elector John of Saxony on March 11. He immediately enlisted the Wittenberg faculty to explain from Scripture the rationale for the Reformation. Documents quickly came together to create an apologetic defense of the Lutheran reforms in liturgy and practice. Yet, while at first the diet looked like a golden opportunity, in the end it became more of a witch hunt.

By the time the Wittenberg team arrived in Augsburg, notorious Roman Catholic theologian John Eck had created a document of 404 propositions charging Lutherans with virtually every heresy under the sun. Charles V was over a month late to the diet; and miscommunications and misunderstandings made his attitude

Waiting on a Call

For information on how you can support this mission contact LBIM
Phone: 218-739-3336
Email: LBIM@CLBA.org.

CLB

North American Mission

Ben Hosch serves as pastor of Stavanger Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where he and his wife Sara attend with their children (Adelaide, Emery and Winnie).

Lutheran Brethren Seminary

In 2016 Ben graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Lutheran Brethren Seminary (LBS), where his grandfather Rev. Harold Hosch served as professor of Old Testament from 1977-88.

International Mission

While at LBS, Ben and Sara sensed a call to mission work among the Hakka people of Taiwan. Ben is related to the Kittelson family who have served in Taiwan since 1987. The Hosch family currently waits for the CLB to confirm their call to Taiwan.

much less congenial than before. The original apologetic documents were no longer effective. A new strategy was needed whereby the Lutherans could confess their orthodoxy while defending their reform.

The tension mounted as the Reformers hastily compiled what was to become the Augsburg Confession. Copies of the document were sent back and forth for comment and editing to Martin Luther, who for safety reasons could not attend the diet. Luther lived in constant anxiety during this time. Finally, the diet was held on June 15. After intense negotiations over which German estates would be represented at the diet, noted orator Christian Beyer was chosen to read the Confession. The reading took two hours, and Charles V was said to have fallen asleep during the recitation. Yet the Reformers and German princes had the opportunity they had been desperately waiting for. They were able to confess their faith to representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, to the praise of some and the chagrin of others. They were able to stand before the Holy Roman Emperor and give a public theology: "This is what we believe. Here we stand."

A public theology is not confessed without consequences. Our Lutheran forebears did not receive the acceptance they were hoping for. For our Christian brothers and sisters today in places like China and Iran the consequences are more severe. A public theology could be a death sentence; confession could cost one their very life. Confession requires that we acknowledge we are citizens of two kingdoms, but maybe one more than the other. The authorities of the one may not accept the tenets of the other. The temporal kingdom in which we dwell as aliens and strangers (1 Peter 2:11) may not accept the terms of our true citizenship in a kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36).

Yet confession is not anti-authoritarian; Christians are not anti-establishment. We are called to pray for our earthly leaders, to respect their authority, to obey the law of the land, to pay our taxes, to be good citizens (Romans 13; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). And it is right and good for us to hold public office at all levels, to be officers of the law, to be soldiers in the military, because these vocations are instituted by God and are for the benefit and welfare of his human creations. Article XVI of our very own Augsburg Confession is a public theology that tells us the governing authorities are God's gracious gift to us and that there are consequences to disobedience.

However, there is sometimes a need to disobey. In Acts 4, Peter and John were told to keep their confession to themselves. They could not obey, but they accepted the consequences for disobedience. Christians may not be anti-establishment; but the establishment has a long history of being anti-Christian. Our confession may be illegal; our public theology may be disobedience. Many governments of the world are hostile to Christians, and our own continues to pressure us in one way or another. We live in a world that is post-Roe v. Wade, post-Obergefell, and doesn't want to hear differently. And yes, we even live in a world where some Christians are embracing things Scripture does not, all the while asserting that Scripture does. Our public theology is becoming the unpopular opinion, even among those who claim to share our faith.

Now more than ever we may need to embody the spirit of our Reformation forebears. Confession is an uneasy paradox because in our public theology we stand both with and against the authorities. Let us learn from our Confessions. We stand upon the Word alone, but our Lutheran Confessions hold us steady. The writers of the Augsburg Confession held their ground and confessed, "Here we stand." This is our Lutheran heritage. Half a millennium later, our public theology should still be the same.

Ben Hosch serves as pastor of Stavanger Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Homeless in Landfill/SeanShot/iStock

Here I Stand

A Beggar Before God

LUKAS KJOLHAUG

On February 17, 1546, on his way back to Wittenberg, Germany after arbitrating a dispute, Martin Luther began to complain of sharp pain in his chest. The first attack passed, but a second quickly followed, and it soon became clear that he was nearing the end of his earthly life. Justus Jonas, a fellow pastor and close friend of Luther, asked him, "Reverend Father, are you willing to die in the name of Christ and the doctrine that you have preached?" Luther boldly responded, "Yes!" Before death could claim him, however, he put pen to paper one last time to inscribe those famous words which came to serve as the hallmark of his life: "We are beggars, that is true." As the ink dried, the Great Reformer breathed his last, his dying words serving as a testimony to the living Christ whom he had so faithfully served.

For a life as monumental as that of Martin Luther, the comparison to a beggar might seem a little odd. After all, this was the man who, just a few decades earlier, had pounded home the nails to his 95 Theses, the hammer blows echoing throughout the Holy Roman Empire. This initial spark ignited the kindling of what came to be known as the Reformation. The fire that soon followed was one that not only devoured but also purified, as it called Christianity back to the authority of the Word and Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven by which humans might be saved (Acts 4:12).

I once heard it said that the two most brilliant individuals to ever live were Albert Einstein and Martin Luther, and not solely because of their intellectual capacities—though these were incredible enough. Rather, these men had to first "un-think" an entire system that had been in existence for thousands of years; only then could they re-think it. They had to "UN-form" before they could "RE-form," and then they needed the boldness and strength to stand up against the forces that be. That takes courage. That takes fortitude. Both of these were qualities that Martin Luther possessed in plenty.

Luther stood before the Holy Roman Emperor at the Diet of Worms and refused to recant, despite the fact that his very life may have been at stake. He single-handedly made the very first

I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

Philippians 3:8-9

New Testament translation into the German language while in hiding at the Wartburg Castle. He stood up to princes, defied edicts, and began a movement that eventually caused a split within the Roman Catholic Church that spread throughout the entire world. If there ever was a man who could look back on his life and proudly stand on his own merits, it was Martin Luther.

Yet, the words we hear from his deathbed are anything but prideful. Instead, Luther prostrates himself and acknowledges that he is nothing more than a humble servant of Jesus Christ. Luther's words closely echo the teaching of Jesus in Luke 17:10: "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

How utterly alien such a claim sounds in today's culture, particularly in the West where autonomy is prized as a virtue! WE are the molders and shapers of our own identities, and it is entirely up to US to determine what legacy we will leave behind—or so we are told.

In a recent podcast, an evangelical Christian host excitedly introduced an exercise he thought everyone needed to try. Essentially, he said, you sit down with a blank piece of paper and write your own eulogy, including everything that you hope people will one day say about you at your funeral. He then went on to describe the real reason for doing this. The point of the exercise, he said, was to help you determine what kind of legacy you wanted to leave behind. In other words, what activities in this life will allow your name to live on after you're gone? What makes you worthy of having your own personal statue sculpted?

As human beings we have an innate desire to prove our value by what we do. We continually feel the need to justify ourselves by demonstrating our worth through our works, so that at the end of our lives we can look at the list of everything we've done and find something worth eulogizing. The sum total of a person, we are told, is what they have accomplished. So all we can do is strive harder, harder, and ever harder. Yet we quickly forget the words of the prophet, who said in Isaiah 64:6 that all of this endless striving is in vain, because "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags." Even our best efforts will inevitably fall far short.

So maybe the legacy we leave behind should have nothing to do with us at all. Maybe, when people look back on our lives, what we want them to see isn't our own accomplishments, but the finished work of Christ. If we think of our lives as paintings, we don't want people to just look at the canvas and comment on the subject matter itself. Rather, we want them to admire the skill it took to craft such a masterpiece. We want them to gaze at the masterful intricacies of the brush strokes and ask in reverent awe, "Who painted this?" We are the paintings, but the only real credit belongs to the artist.

On our own merits, we will never accomplish enough, and we'll never be able to stand on our own two legs. We are beggars, that is true. But here's the thing about beggars: Beggars don't need to stand at all. In fact, a beggar can do nothing on his own. The only thing a beggar can do is open his hands wide and receive what is placed in them. Luther knew that the gift that had been placed in his hands—faith in Jesus Christ—was the greatest treasure of all, and it was on that gift alone that he chose to stake his identity: A desperate, needy sinner saved by someone else, and not by any effort of his own. He knew his righteous deeds would amount to nothing more than a worthless heap, so he rested on Christ's righteousness instead. St. Paul says it best in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

They say that beggars can't be choosers. Thanks be to God, then, that he chose us first.

Lukas Kjolhaug serves as pastor of Bunker Hill Lutheran Brethren Church in Princeton, New Jersey.

CLB Focus

Church of the Lutheran Brethren

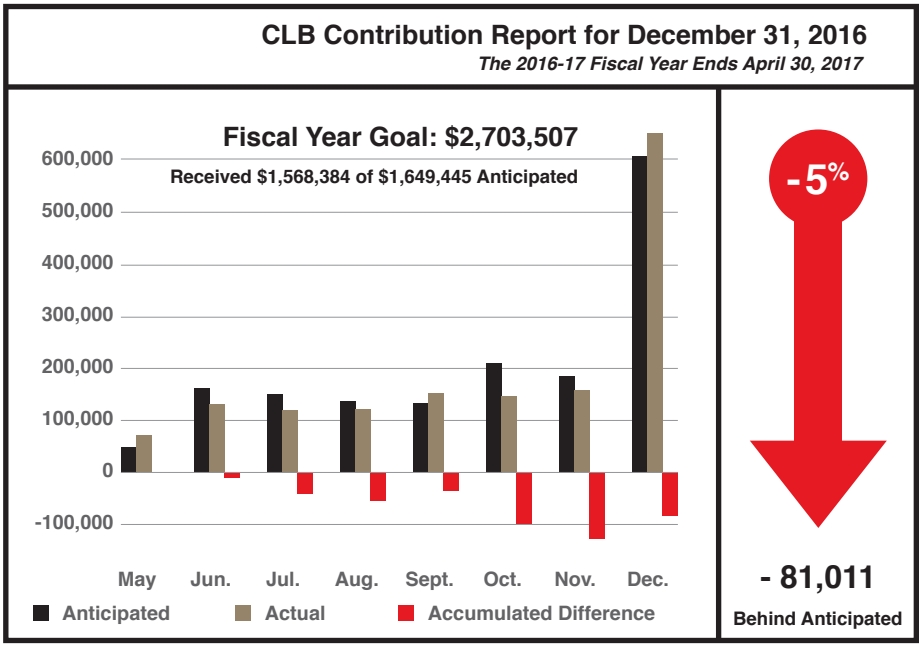
Truly Good Works

ROY HEGGLAND

When you are taking a walk, cleaning your house, taking out the trash, eating lunch, changing a baby's diaper, sleeping, working at your profession or replacing a lightbulb in your closet, you are engaging in everyday things that often seem to have no significance. Even as a Christian, much of your life revolves around these insignificant things. You may start to feel that your only activities of real significance come when you are engaged in "spiritual" things like singing in the choir, teaching Sunday School, reading Scripture, witnessing to your neighbors, praying or participating in worship services. The rest of life's ordinary things are sometimes enjoyable, at times boring, and often just plain hard work—but are they "good works" that please God? Wouldn't it be wonderful if all of your everyday life counted for something?

In the years leading up to the time of the Reformation, the Church taught that good works were crucial. A person seeking salvation did good works so that God would consider that person righteous enough to enter purgatory. From there, it took the prayers of people still living on earth, and of the saints in heaven, to eventually prevail upon God to usher the person into the splendors of heaven. But only truly spiritual good works had merit with God. The rest of life—the normal, ordinary things of life—did not have eternal significance.

Then Martin Luther came upon the scene and rediscovered the truth from Romans 1:17 that "the righteous will live by faith," and that righteousness is a gift of God received through faith in Jesus Christ. Luther came to the realization that the good works he had been doing as a monk to earn God's favor (whipping himself, beating his body, living life in a monastery, etc.) were not good works at all, but were what is described in Isaiah 64:6 as "filthy rags." Luther came to the conclusion that the good works that Christians can do are not directed toward God at all but toward our neighbors. Luther stated, "God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does."



Luther spoke about good works in the context of vocation. Vocation is everything that describes your place in this world. Vocation is your role as a mother, father, daughter, son, brother, sister, carpenter, farmer, doctor, homemaker, pastor, teacher, consumer, golfer, hiker, hunter, swimmer, church member, citizen...

Vocation is the means by which we express the goodness of God to our neighbors. It is the means by which we serve our neighbors. Just as God serves us through the Word and sacraments, we now love and serve our neighbors through "good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

As a child of God going about the routine tasks of life, even those that need to be done every day, you can rejoice in this: God considers all those things you do that contribute to the greater good of your family, your neighborhood, your church, your business, your country, or your world as good works with which he is pleased!

Roy Heggland serves the CLB as Associate for Biblical Stewardship.

Support the CLB: www.clba.org/giving

P.O. Box 655
Fergus Falls, MN 56538

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

Resolved: To Study the Bible

CHERYL OLSEN

When Martin Luther translated the Bible into the common language of the people almost 500 years ago, he made it possible for ordinary people to read an amazing Book previously available to only a privileged few. Today, many homes have multiple copies, and it is often easy to take the Bible for granted! But if you study the Bible together with a group, God not only uses his Word to speak to you, he uses his people as well.

"Why do you come to Bible study? How has studying the Bible impacted you?" These were a couple of questions I posed to some young women who have been involved in Bible studies the past few months.

One answered, "I love the deep connections we make with each other, and the chance to lift one another up in prayer. I also love the rich discussion about God's Word and how it relates to us personally, together in ministry, and to our world."

Another responded: "It reminded me and reinforced God's foundation that I stand on. It has allowed me to face a situation this fall with more clarity and grace because I am able to look beyond myself."

"How did the Bible study change me?" A third stated, "First and foremost it changed how I look at situations in my family and marriage. I realized that there is an unseen war going on where Satan is battling for me and is trying everything in his power to get me to question my faith, question my marriage, and question my choices. The leader broke down the full armor of God in a new way for me, a way that is so applicable and relevant to the battles we face day in and day out. Lastly, it refueled and ignited passion for purposeful prayer—prayer that is big, prayer that is bold, and prayer that is consistent."

Bible with tablet and coffee in a wooded table/Arrangements-Photography/iStock

Others expressed enjoyment of the opportunity to study with and get to know other women from their churches better. They had a stronger awareness of the spiritual realm around us, and Bible study "reinforced the fact that the evil forces are not in control, and with God's help we can manage our thoughts and minds." They learned, when faced with spiritual attack, "how to stand against it in Jesus!"

Another friend shared, "It really reminded me that God is in control, and it was wonderful to meet ladies from all different walks of life and to learn through them… It was definitely a blessing that God put these people in my life in a very difficult time that I didn't even know was going to happen. God is great!"

As New Year 2017 dawns, many of us make resolutions; plans to improve our lives; attempts to "start over" in areas we have neglected. Here's a challenge: join a Bible study group, and look for the ways that God will bless you through his Word, and for the ways he will bless others through you!

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

Visit: ***www.WMCLB.com***

A Remnant *in Pasadena*

PHIL HEISER

Remnant. It's a word that conveys emotion as much as description. A remnant is something left over from a larger portion or group, whether it be a remnant of clothing, food, or a community. Although remnants can be looked upon as leftover scraps, God assigns high value to his people set aside for holy purposes—those he labels as "remnants" in the Bible.

Isaiah reveals that God would preserve a remnant after the destruction of mighty Assyria. He writes, "In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God" (Isaiah 10:20-21).

Every time I read this account in Isaiah, my heart is torn. The grim reality is that many are lost from Israel, because of her sin of fearing the Assyrians more than trusting God. Yet God is loving and faithful. He preserves a remnant in order that his glory might be more clearly seen.

God is preserving a remnant today, his Church. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). While God's sovereign will is often a profound mystery to us, one thing we see again and again in Scripture: God, in his unsearchable wisdom, allowed these tragedies to befall his people, so that they would turn back to him and seek his face.

As Pacific Regional pastor, I have been learning this perplexing lesson of faith and forgiveness alongside our brothers and sisters at Immanuel Lutheran Brethren Church in Pasadena, California. Immanuel has a rich 77-year spiritual legacy of proclaiming "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8, KJV).

Immanuel has been one of the flagship churches in the CLB's 116-year disciple-making movement. This church has been home to many of our past and present CLB leaders. In many ways, Immanuel has been my spiritual home as well. It was my mother's church, and the church of my baptism.

But like many churches in North America, she experienced a gradual decline over the years to the point where both church and synodical leaders knew that something needed to change if she were to have a future of ministry in Pasadena.

A church restart effort was attempted. Mistakes were made along the way that caused regrettable misunderstanding, pain and conflict. Also, to correct the public record, Immanuel never closed its doors to ministry, nor ever intended to cease operating as a church, which had been reported in a couple of press releases and articles. Quite to the contrary,

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Pasadena, CA.

Immanuel has been and will continue to press forward in ministry to the Pasadena community.

Where our intentions and efforts came up short, God's grace and power has all the more been revealed. God has brought forth a remnant in Pasadena that is worshiping him and proclaiming his gospel with the community. It is a remnant that God is growing both spiritually and numerically.

In preserving the Pasadena remnant, God sent a shepherd 18 months ago, Pastor Larry Olson, to care for the flock and lead them into a new future of ministry. God has faithfully brought others to serve alongside Pastor Larry.

Over the past year, the church has seen her attendance steadily grow from the mid-teens to the mid-forties and higher. New Bible classes have begun for adults and children. Last May, ten new members were received into the congregation. Immanuel has forged new partnerships with a local radio station (KKLA) and with the Walter Hoving Home, an organization that helps women heal and transition from a life of substance abuse to an ever-abundant life in Christ. The church now hosts and leads a Career Class helping these same women re-enter the workforce.

Opportunities for outreach into the community have opened up for Pastor Larry. He was asked to serve on the advisory board for Foothill Family Services which provides counseling for families in crisis. He also serves on the advisory board of the Midtown Service Area of the Pasadena Police Department.

This is boasting in the Lord, not Immanuel. They are the remnant, preserved and blessed by God alone. Where we are weak and have stumbled, he is strong and his faithfulness is everlasting (Psalm 100:5).

We are the CLB. We are you. We are the remnant, preserved and blessed by our Lord. We carry forward a mission to the world that includes the souls of Pasadena. Pray for our fellow remnant brothers and sisters, that the peace and hope of Jesus Christ would pour out of their lives and ministry!

Rev. Phil Heiser serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as regional pastor to the Pacific Region.

Red Deer, Alberta, the site of a new church plant initiative.

The River

HAROLD RUST

Wouldn't this be a great place to plant a church?" I caught myself asking my wife that question many times over the last two or three years, when we would stop for coffee on our way through Red Deer, Alberta.

"Why Red Deer? When would that happen?" she would ask.

Good questions.

"Why Red Deer?" It is the city we just pass through on the way to other places. It is located on Highway Number 2 about 90 miles from Calgary, Edmonton, and Camrose; all cities where Lutheran Brethren congregations are located. It is a growing city of 100,000. It is a "hub city," servicing the needs of more than 200,000 people in central Alberta. It has a large college with more than 4000 students in university programs and 32,000 sessional students enrolled in apprenticeships or continuing education programs. At a quick glance, it is underserved; there are 40 churches and, given a very generous average of 300 adherents each, that means there are 88,000 people in Red Deer yet to be reached with the Gospel and connected to a vibrant community of faith.

"When would that happen?" After 15 years as the president of Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute, I was sensing that a time of transition was ahead. It had been a fruitful and fulfilling ministry as we mentored hundreds of students and staff in their Christian walk. But now the ongoing stress of overseeing the dynamics of such a school, coupled with the growing desire to be back in parish ministry, were tools God was using to prepare me for a new call.

During that same time, the Church of the Lutheran Brethren Canada was also sensing a call from God to plant a church in western Canada. A committee had been formed to look into the possibility of such an outreach. The CLBC Board

Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

John 7:37-38

of Directors, meeting in January 2016, broke into a lively discussion when this proposal came to the floor. The motion to plant a church in Red Deer, Alberta was approved and subsequently was brought to the Annual Meeting of the CLBC in March. Anticipation filled the room during that meeting. Who will be called? When will it begin?

The letter of call arrived and the plan was created. The first of September would be the start date to begin visiting Red Deer, with more than coffee and doughnuts in mind. Then the unthinkable happened. Our 26-year-old daughter, Annelise, died suddenly. She had been working at a Bible Camp near Vancouver and was soon coming home after a fruitful summer. Complications related to diabetes arose, and she slipped away into glory.

The outpouring of support for our family from our community and across the CLB family was amazing. Our home was flooded with gifts of love. The way that people reached out to care for us was humbling. Our family felt so blessed.

Weeks passed. In October, I began to visit Red Deer. I had a new motivation. I had been painfully reminded that life can be so fleeting. Every day, people slip away to a Christ-less eternity. Every day, families are thrown into chaos without the support system that had blessed us so tenderly. People in that beautiful Alberta city needed Jesus—a living relationship with the very personal, living Savior who gives hope when life is darkest.

What would we call this new church? During those weeks of deep sorrow, we had been comforted by images from the Psalms, especially the image of a river flowing from the mountains, bringing healing and hope. Why don't we call it "The River—A Church of the Lutheran Brethren"? We shared the idea and all responses were positive. We searched for a domain in which to establish a website and found *www.RedDeerRiver.ca*. Amazing! Scriptures like Ezekiel 47 and John 7 spoke of the river flowing from the temple, bringing life wherever it goes, and from the hearts of believers will flow rivers of living water. We took these as very positive words of confirmation that we were on the right track.

We had a city, a cool name and matching domain, along with biblical references that helped us see the vision—but what about the people? Would there be a nucleus of people to help us begin this work? Once the word got out through publications like the North American Mission prayer notes, people started to contact me. A pastor friend and his new wife are praying about retiring to Red Deer. A group of people had left another congregation a few years ago, and are open to exploring a new vision for ministry. Bible School alumni are considering looking for work or a college education in the city. Doors have opened recently for some dear friends to relocate in a nearby town within reasonable driving distance of Red Deer.

It seems the Lord is providing that nucleus of committed Christian people whom, we pray, will catch the vision to build strong relationships with their neighbors and associates. Then, in time, as good friends, they might be able to share the hope they have in Jesus Christ as naturally as a river flows down from the Rocky Mountains west of Red Deer.

What's next? We'll be praying for contacts in town and people from the CLBC to join us in this adventure. I'll be continuing to visit and become familiar with the city and its culture. We'll have informal house gatherings to study Scripture and build a common vision. I'll visit the mayor and other local leadership. I'll have plenty of coffee with pastors in the city and "hear their hearts" for ministry. Eventually we'll move to Red Deer and plan a launch date for public worship.

Please join us in prayer that the Spirit of God would renew us, so that out of our hearts would flow rivers of living water, and that everywhere we go, and into every conversation, we would bring life and hope, always centered in the person and work of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Rev. Harold Rust served fifteen years as the president of the Canadian Lutheran Bible Institute. He and his wife Joyce have been called by the CLB Canada as church planters to Red Deer, Alberta.

If you would like to join Harold and Joyce in this church plant initiative contact them by email at: harold@CLBI.edu

Skyscrapers in Manhattan/MBPROJEKT_Maciej_Bledowski/iStock

Look Up!

JAMES JENSEN

I'm far from a consistent movie goer. In fact, that's an understatement. However, through the years there have been several series that I've really gotten into: Star Wars, The Chronicles of Narnia, and The Lord of the Rings. The imagination, characters, animation and plots are captivating. We had a friend who was so enamored with the Lord of the Rings series that, when the first two movies came out, he rented a local theater and sold tickets to his friends so we could all watch it together. I was hooked. Besides the brilliance of the movies, these stories develop the all-important conflict of good versus evil. J.R.R. Tolkien's third Lord of the Rings book is titled, The Return of the King. After staggering hardships and epic battles, the "good guys" win. Aragorn takes his rightful place and is crowned King of Gondor. Good has triumphed over evil. There is victory, glory and peace.

As we look at this present world we also long for the return of the King. In our heart of hearts we long for the assurance that no matter what has happened, no matter what is going on in the world, good will ultimately triumph. Without that hope, we live in despair. This is real. If we pay attention to the news, we see nature convulsing in the form of hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes. We see a world in which war and terrorism have been claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands, with no end in sight.

We can develop "thick skin" to a certain degree, but it affects us, and it should. The more we love people, the more we grieve the incredible suffering and loss of life. We yearn for the return of the King! But Scripture gives us hope. It tells us that the King will return, that good will triumph, and that the Son of God will come in glory and rule forever. And because of the gospel, we who know him will live and rule with him in his kingdom, and he will put an end to suffering, sorrow and death. Our King will return.

In Luke 21, Jesus gives his disciples prophetic insights into the end times. He tells them that both nature and nations will be in upheaval and that those who stand for Christ will be persecuted. Then he makes this simple statement: "Now when these things begin to happen, *look up*, and lift up your heads, because your

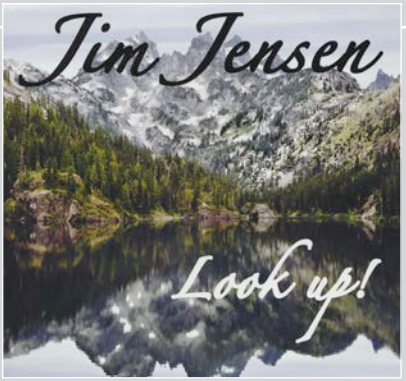
Now Available!

In July 2015 Rev. James Jensen was involved in a motorcycle accident two weeks before a planned sabbatical. The accident left him with six broken ribs, a broken collar bone and a busted shoulder blade.

The sabbatical went forward as planned, but now primarily as a time of healing. Jim was limited during that time, but was reminded of a few songs he had written that he had been encouraged to record. With the help of John Alexander and his home studio, Jim was able to lay down the tracks that would become the album *Look up!* These songs were written to encourage hearts and bring peace to souls.

www.cdbaby.com

To purchase, search:
Jim Jensen and *Look Up!*



redemption is near" (Luke 21:28, World English Bible).

What should we do as his return draws near? "Look up!"

What does that mean? A literalist might think we should walk around looking up to the sky so we don't miss anything. I wouldn't recommend that. I've almost been knocked down by people texting while walking on the sidewalk, and seen a few almost smack into walls and doorways doing the same thing. So what does Jesus mean?

He is talking about focus, anticipation, expectancy.

It's beautiful to see the excitement of a young couple waiting for their wedding. For months they live in joyful anticipation of their "big day." They're just plain excited. That's what Jesus is calling us to do—to live in joyful anticipation of his coming. In Matthew 24 Jesus says "keep watch," or in other translations, "stay awake" or "be on the alert." In other words, keep focused, live in the excitement of the return of the King.

What would it look like if we lived that way? One way to figure that out might be for us to ask the question, "What would I do if I knew Jesus was coming back in a week?" We don't know that, nobody does, but the question stands. What would we do if we knew Jesus was coming back in a week? Hopefully non-Christians would wake up and call out to God for salvation. When he comes again, Jesus says, "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:40-41). What a chilling thought!

Even more terrifying are the words of the Apostle John in Revelation 20:15, "Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire." Don't ever presume on the grace of God. Today is the day of salvation. We don't know when Jesus is coming back.

But what would we believers do if we knew the King would return in a week? I'm sure we would want to be focused on what is important. We'd find every opportunity to talk to our friends and loved ones about knowing Jesus. We'd spend more time seeking the Lord—worshiping him—thanking him. Meaningless TV shows would probably fall off the radar and we'd realize the relative unimportance of whether or not our favorite sports team won last week. We would want to be filled with the Holy Spirit—we'd want our words and actions to always count for something and our lives to overflow with love toward others. We'd make every effort to be at peace with others. Sin would feel more sinful, more pathetic and futile, and God's grace would be recognized as more amazing and wonderful than ever. And we'd be excited and filled with joy!

Reflecting on the words of Jesus, I penned some simple words to a song titled "Look up!"

"The road is narrow going home; sometimes our restless hearts grow weary, longing for the day the crooked shall be straight and we will see the Savior in his glory.

All creation groans to be delivered, ransomed by the power of his grace, but soon he'll come in splendor, his light will pierce the darkness. Transfigured, we will gaze upon his face. Look up…"

When we look at our world today and see the insane and evil things that are happening, it is easy to get deeply discouraged and bewildered. But God's people have an amazing security in Christ. The King will return and triumph in the end. And we will be with him. We will live with him and share heaven with him.

Until the King returns, he has told us to *look up*!

Rev. James Jensen serves as pastor at Community Church of Joy in Sammamish, Washington.

Lutheran Brethren Seminary

J-Term 2017

1036 Alcott Ave W • Fergus Falls, MN

The Reformation and its Application for Today

JANUARY 23

Sessions will be online February 3, 2017

www.LBS.edu/JTerm2017

Session #1 — 1:30-3:00 PM
Luther's Exegetical Journey to the Distinction of Law and Gospel

Session #2 — 3:30-5:00 PM
Luther's Distinction of Law and Gospel in the Interpretation and Application of Scripture Today

5:15 PM
Dinner with Dr. Herrmann for J-Term Attendees

DR. ERIK HERRMANN

Dr. Herrmann is Associate Professor of Historical Theology, Chairman of the Historical Theology Department, Director of Theological Resources and Special Projects, and Director of the Center for Reformation Research at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

His areas of interest and expertise include the history of biblical interpretation, with a particular focus on Martin Luther and the Reformation period; history of medieval and reformation/early modern Europe; 20th century interpretations of Martin Luther and his theology; and the history of American Lutheranism.

JANUARY 24

Sessions will be online February 3, 2017

www.LBS.edu/JTerm2017

Session #3 — 8:30-10:00 AM
Martin Luther and Mission in the Eyes of Modern Critics

Session #4 — 10:30-12:00 PM
In Search of the Missionary Intention of Martin Luther's Mission

Session #5 — 1:30-3:00 PM
Who is Man? The Soteriological and Missiological Implications of Luther's Anthropology

Session #6 — 3:30-5:00 PM
Mission as Understood in the Post-Reformation Era in Particular during Lutheran Orthodoxy

DR. K. DETLEV SCHULZ

Dr. Schulz joined the Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, faculty in the fall of 1998. He currently serves as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Pastoral Ministry and Missions. He is also the director of the Ph.D. in Missiology Program and Dean of the Graduate School. In 1994, he earned his Th.D. in Systematics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

He is the author of numerous books and articles.

JANUARY 25

Session #7 — 8:30 – 9:45 AM
How the Gospel Changes Everything

Session #8 — 10:00-10:50 AM
Small Group Processing Time

Session #9 — 11:00-12:00 PM
Question and Answer Session

DR. PHILLIP CARY

Dr. Cary is Professor of Philosophy at Eastern University and Scholar in Residence at the Templeton Honor College at Eastern University. He earned his B.A. in English Literature from Washington University, St. Louis; M.A. in Philosophy, Yale University; and Ph.D. in Philosophy and Religious Studies, Yale University.

He is the author of several articles and books including *Good News for Anxious Christians*.

Tuition costs for J-Term are $10/each session or $75 for the entire J-Term. Tuition costs may be paid upon arrival at J-Term. Retired CLB pastors and their wives are welcome to attend the lectures tuition-free. For more information or to register, please call (218) 739-3375 or email: lbs@lbs.edu. If you plan to be present for the dinner for J-Term attendees to be held on Monday evening, January 23, please indicate that in your registration. There is no cost to attend the dinner.

CLB NEWS

Walk in the light — Fellowship with one another — The blood of Jesus — Purifies us from all sin

1 John 1:7

Narvesens Arrive in France

The Narvesens: David, Sonja, Nate, Eva, Boeden and Ivan.

After their call to missionary service and commissioning this past summer, Dave and Sonja Narvesen and their children packed and prepared for their time in France, and their subsequent move to Chad. They visited a number of CLB congregations, and then traveled to France at the end of 2016 to engage in French language study. Next year, Lord willing, they will arrive in Chad to take the next steps in preparation for ministry to the Fulbe people of Chad. They will need the prayerful support of the congregations and individuals of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as they study and learn so that they can take the gospel to Fulbe families and villages. The goal is to plant a Fulbe church that will allow that people group, made up of tens of thousands, to hear and receive the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ.

Stantons at Work in Chad

The Stantons: Jeremy, Sallee, Olivia and Abigail.

Sallee and Jeremy Stanton and their two girls arrived in Chad last summer and are serving at LBIM's Lutheran Welcome Center in Ndjamena. The family spent the previous school year in France learning the French language, which is their language of ministry and life in Chad. Learning a language takes time, so they have wondered if their ability in French is adequate. Sallee wrote, "I want so much for my French to be beautiful and perfect and eloquent. But it's not the attractiveness of my French that really matters; it's what God can do with my language and me." As Romans 10:15 says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Even if their French is not beautiful, Sallee went on to say, "My feet will be beautiful, because they are transporting the most beautiful message that anyone has ever heard."

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

(USPS 184-600) • (ISSN 10741712)

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

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

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

re:Think

by: Brent Juliot

Luther's Legacy

It's the 500th Anniversary year since Luther posted his 95 Theses. We're going to be hearing a lot about Luther in our churches this year. What's the big deal about Martin Luther?

Martin Luther isn't inspiring Harold Rust to move to Red Deer, Alberta to plant a church. That's happening because of the love of Christ. Martin Luther didn't encourage our brothers and sisters in Pasadena to hang in there and bring in a new pastor for a fresh start. That's the love of Christ, as well. Martin Luther isn't moving you to send your gifts to the CLB, so that Kingdom work can go forward. That's the love of Christ in you, motivating you. Martin Luther doesn't give people courage to stand by their convictions in places where God's Church is persecuted. That's God's indwelling Spirit, enabling them to stand strong. Martin Luther doesn't make Scripture more understandable to you… Then again, maybe he does.

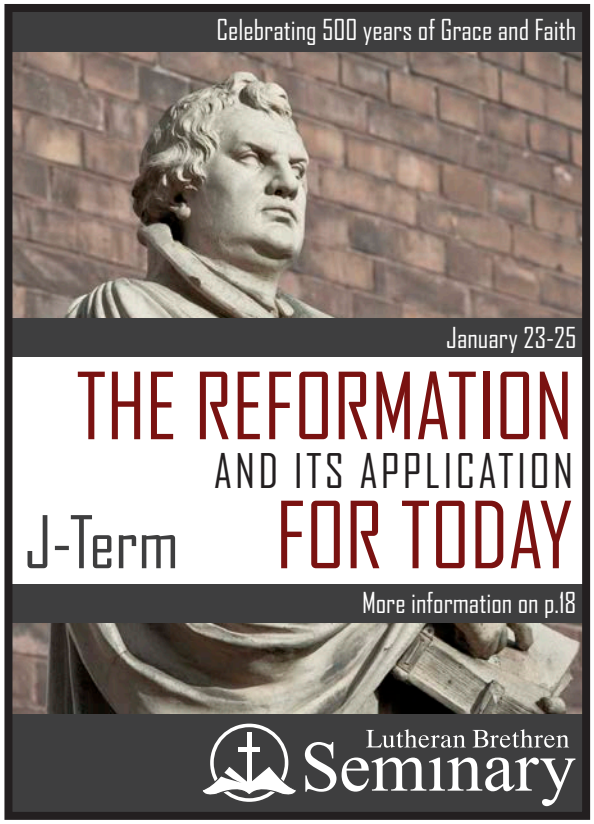
Five hundred years ago, to a Church and a world that had lost the centerpiece and focus of its faith, God gave a gift: a strong reminder that Jesus Christ alone brings salvation to sinners, that salvation is by faith alone in Christ's work—not our works, that it is all by God's grace, and that the wonderful framework of "Law and Gospel" enables us to understand God's Word and how God works.

A wise seminary professor once posed this question to me: Why does the CLB exist? Or why is it important that we continue to exist, minister, and connect to the world around us as much as we can? What treasure do we have that is so valuable? The answer came down to our theology, not merely an academic theology, but one that lives—that honors Jesus and the grace of God received only through Jesus, that sees Jesus Christ at the center of Scripture, the center of history, and the center of our lives.

Jesus Christ alone is our salvation. The Bible, God's holy Word, is our only source for faith and doctrine. But Martin Luther helped us see that. He clarified our view of Jesus. For that we are most grateful.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for Luther's legacy.

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

Periodicals Postage Paid at
Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538

For change of address:
Faith & Fellowship
P.O. Box 655
Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655