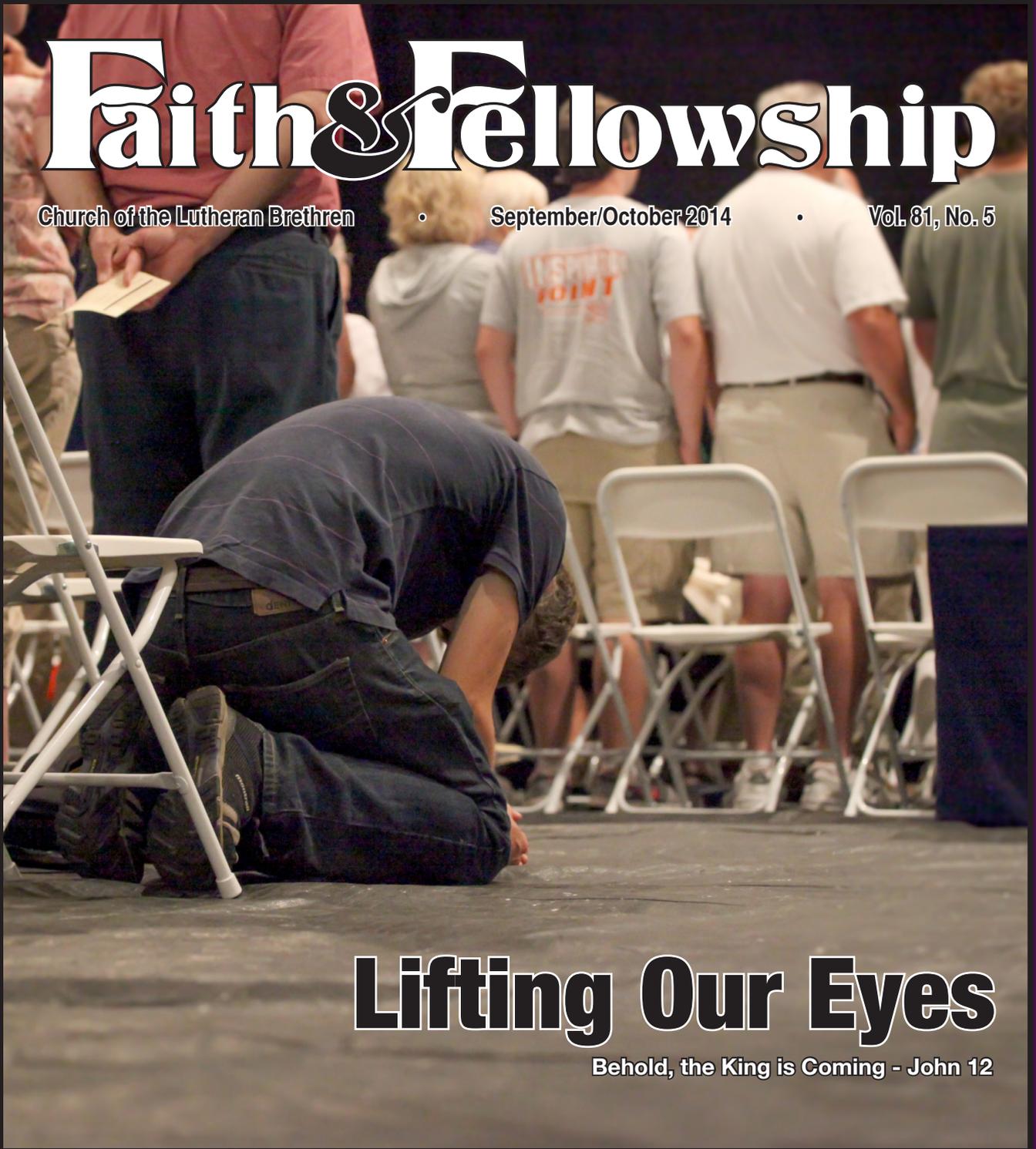


Faith & Fellowship

Church of the Lutheran Brethren

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Lifting Our Eyes

Behold, the King is Coming - John 12

THE ANOINTED KING

THE HERALDED KING

THE GLORIFIED KING

 Biennial
Convention

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Quiet Moments

Great Faithfulness

MICHAEL EDWARDS

On a dark and stormy night nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus walked on water. It is easy to forget that he wasn't the only one to do so. The disciple, Peter, stepped out of the boat and also walked on water, as he looked to Jesus.

But when Peter looked away from Jesus, he saw the wind and the waves; he feared and began to sink.

The storms of your life threaten to overwhelm you. When you look *toward* yourself for hope, you find that you are weak, fragile, helpless and unable to save yourself. And, when you look around yourself for hope, you find only the wind and the waves of your circumstances swirling about.

But when you look *upward*, when you lift your eyes to



Pastor Michael Edwards

Jesus, you see your Savior's hand reaching through the storm to raise you up.

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?” Like Peter, sometimes your faith is small. But Jesus doesn't save you because of your great faith. He saves you because of his great faithfulness.

Are you weary and troubled? Lift your eyes to Jesus. His Word of promise will not fail.

Michael Edwards is pastor of Good News LBC in McAlisterville, PA which is celebrating 20 years of ministry and fellowship in September.

Lifting Our Eyes

BRENT JULIOT

New leaders were chosen, new plans presented with our eyes fixed on Jesus our King. The 2014 Church of the Lutheran Brethren Biennial Convention was a gathering of delegates representing local congregations across the U.S. and Canada. It took place in Fergus Falls, Minnesota July 30-August 1.

For a number of months, CLB congregations and their delegates had been prayerfully wrestling with a significant decision: Who would succeed Rev. Joel Egge as denominational president, now that President Egge was retiring after 13 years in office? It was largely agreed that the 329 registered delegates faced a difficult decision because the slate of Rev. Jeff Seaver and Rev. Paul Larson presented a “win-win” proposition. The delegates cast their votes and Paul Larson was elected.

Grateful farewells were expressed to President Joel and Barbara Egge at a Thursday evening banquet, while Paul and Bee Larson were recognized at his installation as CLB President on Friday evening. Paul will begin serving on October 1.

A key to the future of the CLB was introduced in the new Ministry Advancement Plan, which promises to expand the ministry of Lutheran Brethren International Mission, North American Mission, and Lutheran Brethren Seminary. Rev Troy Tysdal, the CLB’s Acting Director of Communications, introduced the Advancement goals and the rationale behind them. A summary version of his Convention presentation can be found on page 16.

Additionally, Lutheran Brethren Seminary announced a new construction project. LBS will break ground on its new home this Fall. It will be a two-level wing extending north from the



Dan Tinquist and the praise band from Triumph LBC in Moorhead, MN leading the CLB in worship

CLB administration building on West Alcott Avenue in Fergus Falls. The plan is for Hillcrest Academy, which shares its campus with the Seminary presently, to move into the former Seminary building next year. That building will be remodeled to provide classroom and cafeteria space. For more information on the campus realignment visit:

www.CLBA.org/campusrealignment

Convention delegates were pleased to welcome a new CLB congregation. Trinity Lutheran Church of Torquay, Saskatchewan has been received as a member congregation by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren Canada, and was represented at the Biennial Convention by Rev. Daniel Krauss.

In addition, the Fifth Act was introduced and received at the Convention as an Affiliate Organization of the CLB. The Fifth Act is a group of CLB pastors with a passion for launching new Lutheran Brethren churches in the heart of major cities in the U.S. and Canada through recruiting pastors, assessing, resourcing and equipping church plants.

At every CLB Convention, there are many educational, fellowship, and

worship opportunities. As his Word is preached, God is speaking to his people, his Church. For you who were not able to attend, we hope to provide you with a sense of the Convention experience by summarizing here in *Faith & Fellowship* several of the messages that were presented in the worship sessions. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by God in the same way as those who were present, because God was and is speaking to you, his Church.

More detailed information on the CLB 2014 Biennial Convention can be accessed online at www.clba.org, including the full sermon audio files of most of the messages.

Rev. Brent Juliot is editor of Faith & Fellowship magazine, teaches math at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy, and serves as pastor at Stavanger Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, MN.



Visit www.CLBA.org for more on the Biennial Convention



President Paul Larson speaking at his installation

In Great Company

PAUL LARSON

I remember a number of years back, sitting around a conference table of some synodical meeting. A half-dozen pastors were gathered; I was definitely the junior member around the table. A friend and colleague sat across from me—a good man known for his sharp wit and the ability to “cut to the quick.” This dear brother, who has since graduated to a higher plane of ministry, would often say more in one word than I could in a paragraph. After the business of our meeting was completed, the conversation somehow went off in the direction of the future leadership of the CLB, even possibilities of who might someday be our president. I remember a surprisingly candid exchange in which several names of men I greatly respected were put forward. And then, maybe running thin on options, one patriarch

motioned across the table, and said, “or maybe Paul.” There was silence, just a moment, and then my friend across the table could not contain himself and blurted in disbelief one word: “HIM??!!” Tonight, as I said, I know this brother is blessedly busy with other things, but if by chance he *could* be listening, I would just say, “I’m with you.”

This office is not about qualification. I know that. This is about God sovereignly steering, providing, and sometimes—for whatever his purposes—he tabs the short kid out in the pasture.

I want to tell you, however, that I am a product of you. The Lutheran Brethren has been the grindstone and anvil upon which my life and faith have been shaped. From Elim in Clearbrook, the church of my birth, baptism, confirmation, and early investors in me inviting me into

ministry and praying for my life... From my mother, my first theology professor... From the CLB world mission conferences in the old HLA gym... From Inspiration Point camps, youth conventions, and later our Bible college... From Bethel in Fergus Falls where I worshiped and grew, and later married my bride under that cross... From Yellowstone in Billings, where O.D. Thompson risked giving me my first preaching assignment at 19 years of age (25 hours’ preparation for a 25 minute sermon—and very bad!)... From Word of Life in Fort Collins, embracing me as a youthful pastor... From Calvary in Fullerton, where I was offered more grace, where I was blessed with children (five of them!), and given friendships to bless a lifetime... To Bethesda in Eau Claire: You love the Word. You have received me and shaped me in grace,

allowed my wife and children to be their own unique selves within the Body.

What I am saying is: you, all of you, have shaped me. And I need you still. We need each other to see Christ's kingdom come to and through us.

I have always loved the line from the Christmas story, "great company" (speaking of the heavenly host). As a young boy I would position with great care all the characters of the nativity set, and then add my own characters—Spiderman peering over the roof, green army men marching to the crèche with rifles held over their heads, a plastic dinosaur, etc. I made sure all had equal line of sight to baby Jesus. This was my expression, I believe, of a forming theology of the span of the love of Christ. Great Company! I also love the line from Hebrews 12:22, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God... You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly." Great Company! At the start of that same chapter, following that great faith hall of fame chapter, we are assured we are surrounded even in this moment, by "such a great cloud of witnesses." Great Company!

One verse has reverberated in me 26 years since my seminary graduation. It was written to me in a card from a mentor: "God gave the word, and GREAT was the COMPANY of those who proclaimed it" (Psalm 68:11). This speaks of the incredible privilege of being called to pastoral ministry, yet at the same time the humility of admitting absolute dispensability! This also speaks of partnership in the full priesthood of believers, with all bearers of the Word: pastors, men, women; young adults and students whom I need to help me hear and speak the Word, to see visions I no longer see. Again, Great Company!

Twenty-two years ago, young and green, I was entrusted to bring a sermon at the CLB convention at Tuscarora Inn. The sermon was based on Jesus' little parable in Mark 4:26-28, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel..." And the single point I kept circling back to: "the power for growth is in the Seed!"

I believe this just as much, and more now, 22 years of pastoring later. It's all we've got. The Word, the Gospel, the Jesus of the Word! And, his kingdom is coming, with or without us, whether we understand all its mysteries or not, whether we sleep or get up. I revel and rest in this certainty just the same! It is my hope and great prayer—for me, for all of you, for this great company, this partnership we share in the Gospel whose power for growth is in the seed of the Word! Indeed, the seed will grow whether we sleep or get up. But, it is my prayer, my great desire, for us to be awake.

Rev. Paul Larson will begin serving as president of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren on October 1, 2014.



The Church of the Lutheran Brethren's Council of Directors surrounds Rev. Paul Larson during his installation as president of the CLB



Rev. Joel Egge (CLB President from 2001-2014) officiates the installation service



*Above: President Paul Larson is prayed for by the Council of Directors as he takes office
Below: President Paul Larson and his wife Bee at the reception after Paul's installation*





President Joel and Barbara Egge

The Anointed King

JOEL EGGE

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this

perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

—John 12:1-8

Mary is kneeling at Jesus' feet and anointing him. Anointing him for what ministry? Mary has heard the death threats. She knows something of God's plan for rescuing sinners from death. She may recall John the Baptist's proclamation of Jesus as the holy Lamb of God. So Mary pours out her heart in love. She gives without calculating the cost. She uses pure nard.

She had prized this special perfume. But there had never been an occasion worthy of using it. Now her heart recognizes this as the time to use her precious ointment. She pours it all out, empties the bottle, and "the house was filled with the fragrance."

Anointing was a common practice in the Old World. It was used to designate something or someone being selected and dedicated for a specific purpose. Perfume was added to the oil if the person was called to a spiritual mission. So the fragrance of the nard filling the room brings the compelling message that Jesus is on a spiritual mission—that Jesus, the divine Lamb of God, will soon engage Satan, sin, and death. He will give his life to take away the sin of the world!

The perfume is so strong, gentle, and captivating that conversations cease, the people stop eating, and perhaps even Martha pauses. Then in a self-righteous demeaning tone, Judas demands, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?" He addresses Mary, no doubt speaking loudly enough for everyone to hear his charge.

Maybe he's really addressing, attacking, Jesus: "I'm disappointed in you." "You're not as generous as you tell others to be."

Jesus' response is gracious. He protects and assures Mary, declaring she is fulfilling a role in the Father's plan. This anointing is for the day of his burial. He is going to die. It will be soon.

To Judas, Jesus speaks truthfully and kindly. We might expect Jesus to call Judas out, saying, "You are the hypocrite. You talk about the poor, but you are a thief and money has a grip on your heart!" But Jesus wants the best for Judas, much more than money can buy. He wants Judas to have life, the life that is eternal.

Judas charges Mary and Jesus with breaking the second commandment—to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. But Jesus calls Judas back to the first commandment: Start with loving God, and you will have opportunities for the second.

In our text it is Judas who wants a different Jesus, but Jesus repeatedly addressed this attitude within his disciples. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:24-5).

In our churches, it is often us. We all know that "me first" attitude. Its roots go deep in all of us. Little do we realize that we, people in the inside circles, oppose Christ because we "have in mind the things of men" (Matthew 16:23). We confess in song, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love."

In the fall of 2001, my Dad was confined to bed and losing strength. One day when I was with him, shortly before he died, I sat by his bed as he drifted in and out of sleep.

When awake, Dad seemed troubled. He was in pain. He suffered as the medication wore off before he was given another dose. I wanted to read Scripture, but didn't know what to select that day to share with my mentor, teacher, prayer supporter; my father. I found a passage that told of Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf and in our place. I asked him if I could read the Bible for him and he said, "Yes."

After reading, I looked into Dad's face and said, "Dad, your sins are forgiven and you are God's child because of Jesus. The Lamb of God was given for you."

It was a holy moment. It was as if the Lord Jesus lifted Dad's eyes to himself and said, "I am the Lord Jesus Christ, the Resurrection and the Life. I paid your debts. You are mine." Dad's face relaxed, as did his shoulders. He said, "Thank you, Joel."

Jesus gave Dad what he once offered Judas and what he gives you. The Anointed King says to you, "I give you myself, the Anointed Sacrifice, Savior and Salvation. Be assured that the atoning blood applies to you. Believe it and live."

Rev. Joel Egge served as president of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren from 2001-2014. He and his wife Barbara are retired and living in Fergus Falls, MN.



Rev. John Kilde led the recognition banquet for President Joel and Barbara Egge



Pastors and parishioners from all across the Church of the Lutheran Brethren attended the recognition banquet to show their appreciation for President Egge's service to the Church



*Above: Robert Egge thanked the Church of the Lutheran Brethren for its kindness to his parents
Below: Barbara looked on as Joel thanked the Church of the Lutheran Brethren*



The Heralded King

JIM ERICKSON



The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!” Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.” At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him. Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

—John 12:12-19

Suppose a king or queen were coming to your city and you had to orchestrate

the welcome for the royalty. What would you do? What would you say about the royalty? How would you herald this great person?

In John 12, a large crowd went out of Jerusalem to meet and herald the arrival of King Jesus. This crowd came together spontaneously without some local authority commanding it, without an organizing committee. It was not a social media inspired “flash mob.”

God had said this would happen. He even predicted the words that the crowd would say to proclaim Jesus’ arrival and to welcome him. These people knew how to welcome the Heralded King and how to express their adoration of him.

What would the entry of the Heralded King look like today? An entourage of shiny black cars carrying the King and his disciples into the city? Body guards standing on the running boards of the vehicles? Would the King’s black limousine be made of reinforced steel, and would the windows be both bullet-proof and tinted dark so that no one could see him or hurt him?

I don’t think so! No! This Heralded King, even though triumphant, was a

humble King. He came riding a young donkey. In today’s world, he might ride into town in a Geo Metro convertible with the top down!

We are invited to “lift our eyes” to see the Heralded King coming. This triumphant and Heralded King will come again, this time riding on the clouds! But I am getting ahead of the story.

How was the preparation for the King’s entry accomplished?

First, the news preceded him of how the Heralded King had delivered and conquered. Jesus had raised the dead back to life: Lazarus who had been dead for four days.

Jesus had delivered people from sickness and physical challenges— healing people with leprosy, opening blind eyes, opening deaf ears and unspeaking mouths, restoring paralyzed limbs, and casting out demons!

Jesus had delivered from hunger by feeding thousands of hungry people with only a few small fish and a few morsels of bread. He had delivered from depression and sorrow for sin by merely saying to many people, “Your sins are forgiven.”

So the Heralded King coming into



Rev. Jim Erickson speaking Thursday morning at the Biennial Convention

Jerusalem had already delivered many people, but only he himself knew that his greatest challenge and battle, and the greatest deliverance for people, was to take place in a few days.

Second, there was Zechariah's prophecy: "Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." The preparation for the arrival of the Heralded King did not begin just this day in Jerusalem. God had prepared for and announced this triumphal entry centuries before. Now the prophecies were being fulfilled.

When the King arrived, he was welcomed by the praises of the crowd. They weren't wearing monogrammed baseball caps with a picture of Jesus on a donkey! Their praise was expressed in their use of the palm branches to welcome this King. The Bible scholar Lenski points out that, while we usually regard palm branches as symbols of victory and triumph, the ancient oriental regarded them as symbols of life and salvation. With these symbols of life and salvation the crowds went to herald the arrival of Jesus to Jerusalem, giving him a King's welcome!

Their praise was also expressed in the word "Hosanna," a shout of hope and exultation. It once meant "Save, please!" or "Save now!" But gradually, it came to mean, "Salvation! Salvation! Salvation has come!"

Their praise was shouted to the King who came in the name—with the presence and authority—of the Lord who alone is the King of Israel! Their praise expressed their desire to see this Heralded King established on the throne of David.

Today our praise of this Heralded King also comes in our heartfelt desire to see the throne of this Heralded King come to us and be established forever.

Not everyone in the crowd shouted praises that day. In fact, Jesus own disciples were temporarily perplexed! The Pharisees definitely had a problem with the Heralded King, because they had their own agenda.

What about us? This Jesus is the great King whom we proclaim today! Are we preparing for his grand return? Do we praise him because, like the people gathered in Jerusalem that day to herald his arrival, we too have witnessed his works? Our preparation for his coming

involves witnessing, proclaiming and praising this great King, this one who has conquered sin and death.

The battle that this Heralded King entered into those days before the Passover was the greatest battle in the history of humankind. The outcome of that battle means life for all who believe.

Come let us lift our eyes to prepare for this Heralded King! He has won the greatest of all battles, conquering sin and death.

Rev. Jim Erickson serves as senior pastor at Calvary Community Church in Fullerton, CA.



Visit www.CLBA.org for more on the Biennial Convention



Professor Brad Pribbenow speaking Thursday evening at the Biennial Convention

The Glorified King

BRAD PRIBBENOW

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be.

My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

—John 12:20-26

Expectations run high for the national gathering of our church family, and this is only right. We’ve all desired the 2014 Biennial Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren to be a mountain top experience, a celebration remembered as nothing short of *glorious*!

But I suggest that God’s desire for BC 2014 is not our glory, but our death!

I’m talking about the subtle difference between seeking God’s glory and seeking our own. The unique tension that exists between these two is something we all experience. When we’re engaged in

ministry, and we’re about God’s work, we do so for the glory of God. Yet it can be so easy to lose our focus and begin to equate *God getting glory* with *us getting glory*.

In John 12:20, Jesus is gaining a lot of attention and some God-fearing converts seek an audience with him. But Jesus does not seek this kind of glory.

When Andrew and Philip inform Jesus that these Greeks had requested to see him, Jesus turns from them to his immediate audience and says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” Can’t you hear his disciples? “YES! You’re right, Jesus! This is the time. Let’s do this!”

But then Jesus says, “Truly, truly, I say

“Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.’”

John 12:23-24

to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (12:24).

“WHAT! What are you talking about, Jesus? Now is not the time for death! Now is the time for glory! What do you mean by all this talk of DEATH?”

Death is so counterproductive. That’s why I generally work to avoid death. I stay active, try to eat right, avoid life-threatening activities. But physical death is not the only kind of death that threatens me.

I avoid with a passion the death that comes through losing a sense of control. I want to look good in the eyes of others, so I fight hard against having to admit my errors, or to acknowledge that I don’t have all the answers.

When I am embarrassed, or dismissed, or ridiculed, or not given the proper respect, I feel the threat of death coming on, and so I fight to keep some vestige of my power, my potential, my dignity, my comfort.

What is true of us individually is also true of us as a church. In our efforts to promote our church and to bring life to our church and to reach into our community, it is easy to seek our own glory. And so I ask, what does it mean to lose our life not only as individuals, but also as a church?

Death seems like such a useless path. Yet Jesus, again and again, when presented with an opportunity for notoriety and recognition, spoke about giving it all up. Didn’t he see the great possibilities of taking the stage that the world seemed so ready to give him?

To understand the image of the kernel of wheat dying in verse 24, we simply need to look at Jesus. His death was

real and complete. It certainly wasn’t comfortable. It was humiliating and painful. It left him deserted, beaten, and bloodied, hanging lifeless on a tree.

Death is the end of our selves. And we don’t like this because we’re afraid that if we heed Christ’s call to lose our lives and accept an “un-glorious” death that it will truly be our end—that we’ll become a doormat for others, or that we’ll be forgotten and insignificant.

All this leads to the question: Why is God so insistent on death? Two reasons. The first concerns you and me. We sin daily and we cannot break free. Our sin demands *our* death. The second concerns Jesus. For while God is insistent on our death because our sin requires it, God is likewise insistent on *Jesus’* death because our sin requires it. In order to restore our fellowship with God, a blood sacrifice is required. A spotless, blameless one must fall to the ground and die in our place.

In our death God is glorified because he deals with sin as it deserves: he judges it! In Jesus’ death God is glorified all the more: the holy, righteous judge is also shown to be a gracious and merciful savior as he places our sin upon his one and only Son.

I love the CLB—our mission, our people, our theology. We have a constant desire to bring glory to Jesus. Yet we cannot do this rightly because we have this sinful tendency of stealing that glory for ourselves. We want to bring glory to Jesus, but in so doing we end up like Peter saying, “No, Jesus. Not your way. We’ve got a better way that’s not so humiliating, not so painful.”

What is God’s desire for BC 2014? A glorious death. A glorious death of his

servants, who live because of the glorious death of his Son. We are the abundant fruit of his death.

Jesus says that the Father will honor the one who serves him. Imagine: God giving honor to us! But the one truly deserving of honor and glory is Jesus. May it be our pleasure to follow him and to one day join the thousands upon thousands who have been born again because of Jesus’ glorious death. We will sing with them, in Revelation 5:12, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

Rev. Brad Pribbenow is Professor of Old Testament at Lutheran Brethren Seminary in Fergus Falls, MN.



Visit www.CLBA.org for more on the Biennial Convention

The Lifted-Up King

JOHN JUHL

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” [Jesus] said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

—John 12:31-33

Jesus is the Lifted-up King. Normally “lifting up” carries with it a connotation of honor, celebration, or something desirable for the person that is “lifted up.” For Jesus, however, the honor was mingled with horror, the desirable with death. John informs us that Jesus’ use of “being lifted up” was a reference to his impending death on the cross (12:33).

This was not the first time Jesus mentioned being lifted up in John’s gospel account. In his nighttime conversation with Nicodemus he declared: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14).

Sin and death were introduced to the world in connection with a snake. As a result, the snake was cursed “above all livestock and all wild animals” (Genesis 3:14). Henceforth in the Scriptures the snake became a symbol of deception, the curse, and death.

In Numbers 21:4-9 we learn that the Israelites spoke against God and against Moses. In response, “the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died” (21:6). After the people confessed their sin, the Lord instructed Moses to “make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live” (21:8).

The cure for the consequence of sin took the form of the symbol of the curse, the snake.

Biologists and reptile enthusiasts may be quick to point out that not all snakes are harmful to humans, but snakes in the desert are generally not a good thing for people who live there.

As a missionary living near a desert in northern Kenya, I learned that the people there had a nearly unanimous fear and hatred of snakes—and for good reason. Some of the deadliest snakes in the world can be found in Africa. Their view was that all snakes were bad, and that some snakes were very bad.

One day while working around our mission compound, I heard the voice of John, the watchman, call out, “Lasurai! Lasurai!” (“Snake! Snake!”). I could tell from John’s tone of voice that the snake he spotted was a “very bad” one.

There it was in the tree above our water well, just fifty feet from the front door of our home. John and I each grabbed a long piece of galvanized pipe and set about eliminating this menace from our front yard.

John took the lead in the attack. With lightning speed and deadly accuracy, he pinned the serpent to the tree limb with his pipe. The beast was now writhing wildly.

“Piga! Piga!” (Hit! Hit!) was John’s adrenaline-spiked exhortation to me. So while he kept the snake attached to the tree with his pipe, I repeatedly swung my pipe at it, scoring several hits until its wild writhing had all but stopped. John then let the snake drop to the ground where I gave it one last fatal blow to the head.

The vile, venomous creature was dead.

Proud of our triumph over the snake, we lifted its beaten, bloodied, and lifeless body up on the ends of our pipes and posed for a photo.

This, I now realize, is a picture of me and Jesus. This is what Jesus became for me. To take away my sins, to remove the curse from me, Jesus, my Lifted-up King, took the curse—took my sins upon himself. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The defeat of the serpent, as promised in Genesis 3:15, required that the sinless, beloved, blessed Son of God become regarded as a sinner, a despised and cursed creature. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13).

Isaiah prophesies of what this Lifted-up King had to endure and why he had to endure it before being lifted up in another way—the exaltation that he rightly deserves.

“See, my servant will act wisely; *he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted*. Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—so will he sprinkle many nations...

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for

our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 52:13-15a, 53:3-6).

This is what it means for Jesus to be the Lifted-up King.

As the Lifted-up King, Jesus declared that he would draw all people to himself (John 12:32). The original hearers of this declaration included Greeks, those who were not included in the Old Covenant community. Jesus was indicating that the Good News of the Lifted-up King is intended for all people, a fact re-affirmed in the Great Commission Jesus gave his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 to “make disciples of all nations.”

The snake lifted up in the desert was a welcome sight for all the snake-bitten Israelites who realized they were at death’s door and believed that this symbol of the curse was God’s chosen means of deliverance.

So it is with Jesus, the Lifted-up King. He is Good News for all who have been bitten by the curse of sin and trust in him as the cure.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Rev. John Juhl serves as associate pastor at Lutheran Brethren Fellowship Church in Williston, ND.



Visit www.CLBA.org for more on the Biennial Convention



*Northern Kenya: The watchman and the missionary triumph over a deadly snake
Below: Rev. John Juhl speaking Friday morning at the Biennial Convention*



The Messenger King

MARK JARVINEN

Then Jesus cried out, “Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”

—John 12:44-46

The Messenger King embraces a darkness-shattering mission.

The mission of Jesus, the Messenger King, is revealed in John 12:44-45. To believe in him is to believe in the one who sent him, the Father. Jesus goes on to say that to look at him is to see the Father. God the Father, with whom Jesus is one in nature, nevertheless had sent Jesus into mission to the world.

Jesus came from the Father, as God in human form, to reveal the Father and to speak on his behalf concerning his salvation plan. In the same passage, Jesus alludes to the message given him by the Father, saying, “For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that his command leads

to eternal life” (John 12:49-50a). This is new life that begins in this world and extends to the world to come.

So we ask: “How does Jesus reveal the Father who sent him to the world with the message of eternal life?” Jesus responds, “I have come into the world as a light” (John 12:46). Why does he come as light? “... so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”

We all know that this world is shrouded in the darkness of sin and evil. In C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the character Tumnus explains to Lucy why it’s so cold and dreary in Narnia: “It’s because of the evil Queen [the White Witch]. It’s she that has got all Narnia under her thumb. It’s she that makes it always winter and never Christmas; think of that!”

Lewis’ comparison to Satan and his kingdom of darkness is obvious. As the god of this age, though Satan is a defeated foe, he still seeks to keep the eyes of many blinded by unbelief (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The darkness of unbelief is pervasive today. Literally moments before writing

these very lines, I completed an on-line survey of local pastors, sent by our school district superintendent, to determine which topics need the most attention at our next Faith and Community planning session. Among the choices: 1) The sexuality curriculum, as you can imagine, a complex subject today; 2) Bullying, including cyber-bullying; and 3) The drug problem and where is it starting—in the home or school? The list went on. You get the picture. Manifestations of darkness and unbelief are everywhere. Our streets aren’t safe. Human sex trafficking is a real issue, even in North America. The media portrays myriad forms of darkness. Our institutions in some cases shape it.

But darkness isn’t only “out there.” Due to the wiles of Satan, the allure of this world, and the weakness of our own flesh, which is still capable of rearing its ugly head, darkness can sometimes be found crouching at the door, or even lurking in the recesses of our own hearts as Christians. I find it interesting, for instance, that just before Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the disciples James and John were pridefully



Rev. Mark Jarvinen speaking Friday evening at the Biennial Convention

ving for seats of honor in Jesus' Kingdom. With all that was at stake, they still had their own agenda. Do you agree that this sounds painfully all too familiar?

Dare I ask about the dark recesses of our hearts? Notice again. Why did Jesus come to the world? "...so that no one who believes in me should stay [or remain, or abide] in darkness." Is it straining the light/darkness contrast in John too far to ask, "Lord, have I wandered from the radiance of your presence?" or "Lord, have I grown comfortable living in the shadows of life's comforts and distractions?"

Our mission—as a denomination, as Lutheran Brethren congregations and as individual Christians—is to bring the light of Christ to the world. Earlier this summer at a CLB vision-casting event in Bloomington, Minnesota, President Egge shared with deep conviction: "As the CLB, we want to shine the light of Jesus Christ into the darkest places in our world."

The first response of my heart was, "Do I want to?" I was convicted. A few moments later, came this silent prayer,

"Lord, forgive me for my lip service concerning my role in the extension of your Kingdom. Lead me to repentance. Release me from all that hinders my full participation in your mission. Yes, Lord, I want to."

Our vision indeed is to shine the light of Christ to the darkest places in our world. This will remain the vision that our new president and our leaders will continue to articulate before our Church body. Pastors from their pulpits all across our denomination will echo this vision. We are called to reflect the light of Christ wherever he has placed us. Jesus says in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." That's our assignment. Obedience to it grows out of who we are as Christ's followers and the gracious provision he supplies. Christ's mission is why the Church remains in the world, and we as the Church of the Lutheran Brethren want to be a vital part of what God is doing today, while it is still day.

But even as we are reminded of our mission, let's pray also for the renewal of our hearts. Let's allow the searchlight of God's Spirit to shine on our lives and

lead us out of the shadows. Repenting of our sin, may we see Jesus in a fresh, new light: He is our access, by the blood-sprinkled way, into the loving arms of our gracious Heavenly Father, who does not deal with us according to our sin, but according to our need for his forgiveness. Our participation in the mission of Christ will then be a labor of love, a grateful response to all God the Father has done for us in Christ. Amen.

Rev. Mark Jarvinen is a volunteer police chaplain and serves as pastor of Community of Joy Church in Eagan, MN.



Visit www.CLBA.org for more on the Biennial Convention



Rev. Troy Tysdal presenting the 5-year plans and goals of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren

A Kingdom United by the Word of God

CLB 5-Year Plans & Goals

TROY TYSDAL

I've learned a lot since coming to work for you at the CLB offices. I've learned that you—the congregations, the pastors and the people in the pews—you are vital to our shared ministry. It's your giving, your prayers, and your input that push our denomination forward. You are the Church of the Lutheran Brethren! And I'm humbled to share a message with you about the five-year plans and goals of our shared ministries.

MATTHEW 12:22-28

Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince

of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

As a third grader, I rode the bus to and from school. My older brother also rode that bus, and our bus, like many buses, had a bully. He was big and mean! He controlled where we sat, how loud we spoke, and if he didn't like the

conversation we were engaged in he would try to change it. He was terrifying! Everyone on the bus feared him. The bully especially hated my older brother. They were the two biggest kids on the bus, and he saw my brother as a threat.

After months of terror, I decided I would try to befriend the bully. I'd always been able to talk my way in and out of trouble, so I decided to charm the bully. To my surprise, the bully quickly warmed up to me. I think he even started to like me. But one thing didn't change; he still hated my older brother.

One day the bully asked me "Do you think you can beat up your older brother?" "No!" I replied. "I've tried."

In fact, I'd tried many times to no avail, but it turned out the bully was pretty good with words as well and soon I made my way to my brother's seat, confident I

could take him. I gave him the craziest look I could muster and then attacked. My bigger, stronger brother quickly overpowered me. But that's when the bully struck. He leapt from the back of the bus... and pounced on my brother. Even as a third grader, I knew I'd been tricked. The bully wrestled my brother to the floor. As he held my brother in a headlock, I can remember looking the bully right in the eye and punching him with all that I had.

There was some explaining to do when we got home. At first my father was pleased, not with the fight, but with the fact that I had gone to my brother's aid. But after hearing my brother's side of the story—the whole truth—my father was grieved.

He lectured us, and the message was clear, “a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand” (Mark 3:24).

I didn't grow up Lutheran Brethren. In fact, I didn't even know the Lutheran Brethren existed until 2006. It was through the ministry and outreach of a Lutheran Brethren congregation that the Lord reached me... and changed my eternity. So I wasn't Lutheran Brethren, but I am now... and I've bought in. I'm in! I entered Lutheran Brethren Seminary in 2007. There I was taught that to be Lutheran Brethren is to submit to the Word of God.

Satan hates the Word of God. He's a bully, dividing the Church, trying to tell us how loud we can speak. His voice permeates our culture, and yet here we stand... the Lutheran Brethren, holding to God's Word.

His Word is taught at Lutheran Brethren Seminary, and his Word is what we are taking to the ends of the earth. While 90% of the world's missionaries are sent to Christianized regions, the Church of the Lutheran Brethren is sending missionaries to the unreached in Asia and Africa, to people who have never heard the Gospel before.

And the bully—Satan—is mad, raging against us, trying to tell us where we can sit. We have four missionary families on home assignment, three that were in Chad and one that was on its way. Satan is fighting back, but here we stand, holding to the Word of God.

As important as our mission is

internationally, our mission in North America is just as crucial. We live in a culture that is turning away from God, and Satan is telling the Church to stay silent, to be “tolerant,” to keep our opinions to ourselves. Many larger denominations have caved to the pressure, yet here we stand, the Church of the Lutheran Brethren... a little denomination with a very BIG God!

So here's what we are going to do: We are going to push forward! We are going to advance! For several years we've been operating under a budget that's designed to maintain our current ministries, to tread water, and nothing more. However, over the last two years, under the guidance of President Egge, our leadership has been working with a consulting firm. Studying the CLB, they've found that we are a denomination with the means and the passion to expand our mission. Their conclusion: If we present a clear vision, our congregations will get behind it, and the financial support will come.

I believe that God has positioned the Church of the Lutheran Brethren to be light to people lost in darkness, to push forward into enemy territory. If you believe that, then we are strong; but if not, we are divided.

The specifics: This year the Seminary is implementing a cross-cultural experience for its students. We will be sending students to see firsthand the mission in Chad, Africa—the goal being to produce a passion in them for the Great Commission. In addition, this fall our Seminary will test a pilot course in lay leader training, something our churches have asked for! To launch this new ministry, over the next five years, Lutheran Brethren Seminary will raise its budget by \$550,000.

North American Mission, over the next five years, will partner with Lutheran Brethren congregations to plant five new churches. NAM will raise its budget by \$1,500,000—primarily for church planting. This effort has already begun. Satellite congregations are being planned in neighboring communities by Grace LBC of Bismarck, ND and Bethel LC of Fergus Falls, MN. Under the umbrella of church planting, NAM has also begun to explore what an immigrant ministry in North America might look like.

Through Lutheran Brethren International Mission, we will be sending three new missionary units to join our team in Chad and an additional unit to join our team in Taiwan. To accomplish this task, LBIM will be raising its budget by \$1,700,000 over the next five years.

The task before us is huge, and it cannot succeed without God. Without God we could all go home. But, so often we look to the heavens and say, “This is your mission God, what are you going to do?” And I believe that God has already answered. I believe that in his divine providence God has handpicked each one of us to play a part in his mission... a part that he calls the role of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

Back when I was in third grade, one Sunday my brother and I were walking down a long hallway in our church. Turning the corner, we encountered the bully—he went to our church! The bully grabbed my brother and twisted his arm behind his back. Everyone nearby—kids and adults—just watched. Then in an instant, the blink of an eye, it was over.

My father came around the corner and grabbed the bully by the back of the neck. Out of fear, the bully's legs went limp and he crumpled to the floor. I don't know how it looked to the adults present that day, but I can tell you how it looked to me; it looked as though my father was laying my enemy at my feet.

It might feel like Satan has our arm twisted behind our back, but a day is coming when our Father in heaven will lay him at our feet. Satan is trying to tell us where to sit; it's time that we stand up. Satan is trying to tell us to be silent; it's time to shout from the rooftops. Satan wants to hold us down, so it's time to hit him with all that we have.

The victory was won at the cross by Jesus Christ, and our Lord is coming back. Until that day, we can tread water, or we can cling to the cross and push forward, united in mission by the Word of God! I'm in... but it's going to take more than me. It's going to take all of you—the Church of the Lutheran Brethren!

Rev. Troy Tysdal is Acting Director of Communication and Prayer for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



ReVision. ReNew. ReConnect.

CHERYL OLSEN

It was our first convention “selfie!” Rachel Patterson, Women’s Ministries Chairman, snapped a photo of herself and part of the audience for the WMCLB Facebook page. What a great way to ReConnect with those who couldn’t be in Fergus Falls with us! Almost 800 have now seen this picture!

At the Event, many did ReNew friendships and ReConnect with others. But “ReVision. ReNew. ReConnect.” went deeper than that.

Missionary Teresa Szobody shared Scripture with us, along with a glimpse into her life. “We will reap a harvest of blessing, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9). In Africa, God encouraged her through letters and cards from people she didn’t even know, who were praying for her. Back in the U.S. this year, she felt honored to be a part of that “prayer team” from afar, as she joined others praying for her grandson Cyril Szobody, sick in Chad, and Mandy and Danny Bronson’s son Samuel, sick in France. She was far away, and prayer was the only thing she could do—the only thing any of us could do. But her words to us were powerful: “The *only* thing is the *best* thing you can do!” We caught a ReVision of the ministry of prayer: God’s grace *to us*, and *through us*, as we pray.

Alyssa McIvor, our keynote speaker brought to life the familiar story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10, weaving her own narrative together with their responses. As she spent months in and out of hospitals with her baby Becky suffering countless seizures, Alyssa was exhausted, in distress like Martha, pleading for help. But she remembered David in Psalm 27, who was chased and attacked, yet desired to focus intently on the Lord. God changed and ReNewed



Rachel Patterson, Women's Ministries Chairman, snaps a "selfie" at the 2014 WMCLB Convention

Alyssa’s vision, enabling her at last to see that he is, indeed, enough for her. Though the path she traveled with God ultimately led to Becky’s death, she knew that God never left her. Alyssa closed with a challenge to us: Will we choose to lose even our own fears for the “one thing” that Jesus asks us to choose? Sit at his feet. He is enough.

ReConnecting through prayer closed the morning. Mandy Bronson shared her heart, with Samuel in her arms, and ZamZam Raun revealed the blessings, challenges, and dangers of her school among Muslims. Sue Olson prayed for them, while Ruth Christenson and Casey Baardson prayed for the National Team and projects we will support this year. What a privilege we have, joining together in the work of God’s Kingdom!

ReNewed praises...

• We had abundant giving this year! We voted to give an additional \$4,000 to “Mercy Guinebor.”

- New Focus Project 2014-15: Hospital Guinebor II (G2), providing concrete bricks to build walls desperately needed for safety, enclosing the hospital complex (including ZamZam’s school). A maternity ward is also planned, as G2 now delivers 100 babies per month!
- Opportunities to send infant clothing and blankets (shipping costs of \$4/lb also appreciated).
- New Secretary elected: Alison Olson, Fergus Falls, MN.
- New Information Coordinator appointed: Kim Goodman, Olympia, WA.
- Excellent workshops during CLB convention, and Saturday afternoon.

We rejoice in God, who gives us his Vision; who ReNews us; and who longs to ReConnect with us!

Cheryl Olsen is Information Coordinator for Women's Ministries of the CLB.

Kiefat Ordained



On April 13, 2014, 1st Lt. Brian Kiefat was ordained as a chaplain in the Army National Guard. Regional Pastor Gary Witkop performed the ordination.

Rogness Ordained



On June 20, 2014, Doug Rogness was ordained as a pastor at Triumph Lutheran Brethren Church in West Fargo, ND. Regional Pastor Joel Nordtvedt performed the ordination.

Elder Updates



L to R: Rev. Kevin Patch, Doug Bounds, Dwight Schmidt, Patrick Erickson, Rev. Shawn Bowman, Mike Woodley and Rev. John Kilde.

Victory Lutheran Brethren Church in Jamestown, ND installed Patrick Erickson as an elder on Sunday, March 23, 2014. He and his wife, Gracia, have three children: Hannah, Jonah and Ava.

Helland Installed



L to R: Steve Olinger, Rev. Bill Helland, Larry Fransson - Chairman of the CLB Council of Directors, Donald Hanson and Michael Olinger.

On February 9, 2014, Rev. Bill Helland was installed as pastor at Cornerstone Community Church in Ferndale, WA. Larry Fransson, the Chairman of the CLB Council of Directors, performed the installation.

Wiles Retire from LBIM

Rev. John and Kathryn Wile have served the CLB as a pastoral care team for LBIM for over 20 years. Their ministry on behalf of the Church to our missionaries' spiritual health has been invaluable.



On behalf of the CLB, thank you very much, John and Kathryn, for your loving, consistent and impactful ministry to our missionaries serving in Africa and Asia.

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re:Think

by: Brent Juliot

Decision-Making and the Will of God

Delegates of CLB congregations faced major decisions at the recent Convention: the most difficult leadership decision in 13 years and the endorsement of a new five-year ministry initiative. But whose decision was this?

In the New Testament era, a less democratic time than ours, such major decisions might remain in the hands of the Apostles. A really major decision might be decided by casting lots, perhaps the equivalent of flipping a coin today. We would be appalled to witness such a method of choosing at a CLB Convention. But was their process flawed?

Is the Church of today so much more enlightened than the ancient Church? Consider the choice of a new Apostle to replace Judas in Acts 1:23-26. We see that leadership (Peter) initiated the process and sought the input of the Church. Certainly, God-given wisdom was employed and careful consideration was given as to who was qualified and gifted for the position. Two candidates were chosen. And the Church prayed! The process must have been bathed in prayer, and at decision time, their prayer was to commit this decision to God *and to accept his choice*. Did the Church decide or did God decide?

Is our approach to decisions today so different? Plans are made with the Church's input, clarified with God-given wisdom, and prayer is key to all of it. When we vote on candidates or ministry plans, we commit the decision to God and trust his choice in the matter. There is no second-guessing.

It has been a very long year for the CLB presidential candidates, and a time of intense prayer for them by many people in CLB churches. The Mission Team and Council of Directors has at the same time been praying, seeking God's wisdom for the five-year Ministry Advancement Plan. At the Convention, delegates prayerfully voted for the candidates and voted to endorse the Plan.

The Convention's theme was, "Lifting Our Eyes: Behold, the King is Coming." In lifting our eyes to see our King, we have found that we see him best while on our knees, in humility and in prayer, trusting him for the outcome.

Are we done now? No. As a new president begins to serve and as the new Plan is acted upon, the call to prayer is just beginning. Lifting our eyes to Jesus our King is not a slogan, but a way of life for his Church.

Rev. Brent Juliot is editor of Faith & Fellowship magazine, teaches math at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy, and serves as pastor at Stavanger Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, MN.

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The cover of the BC14 Report features a purple and white crown with a cross on top, set against a background of a sunset over a horizon. The text "LIFTING OUR EYES" is prominently displayed in white, with the subtitle "BEHOLD, THE KING IS COMING! - JOHN 12" below it. At the bottom, it says "CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN BRETHERN BC14 REPORT WATCH VIDEOS ONLINE www.CLBA.org" and includes the CLB logo.

LIFTING OUR EYES
BEHOLD, THE KING IS COMING! - JOHN 12

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