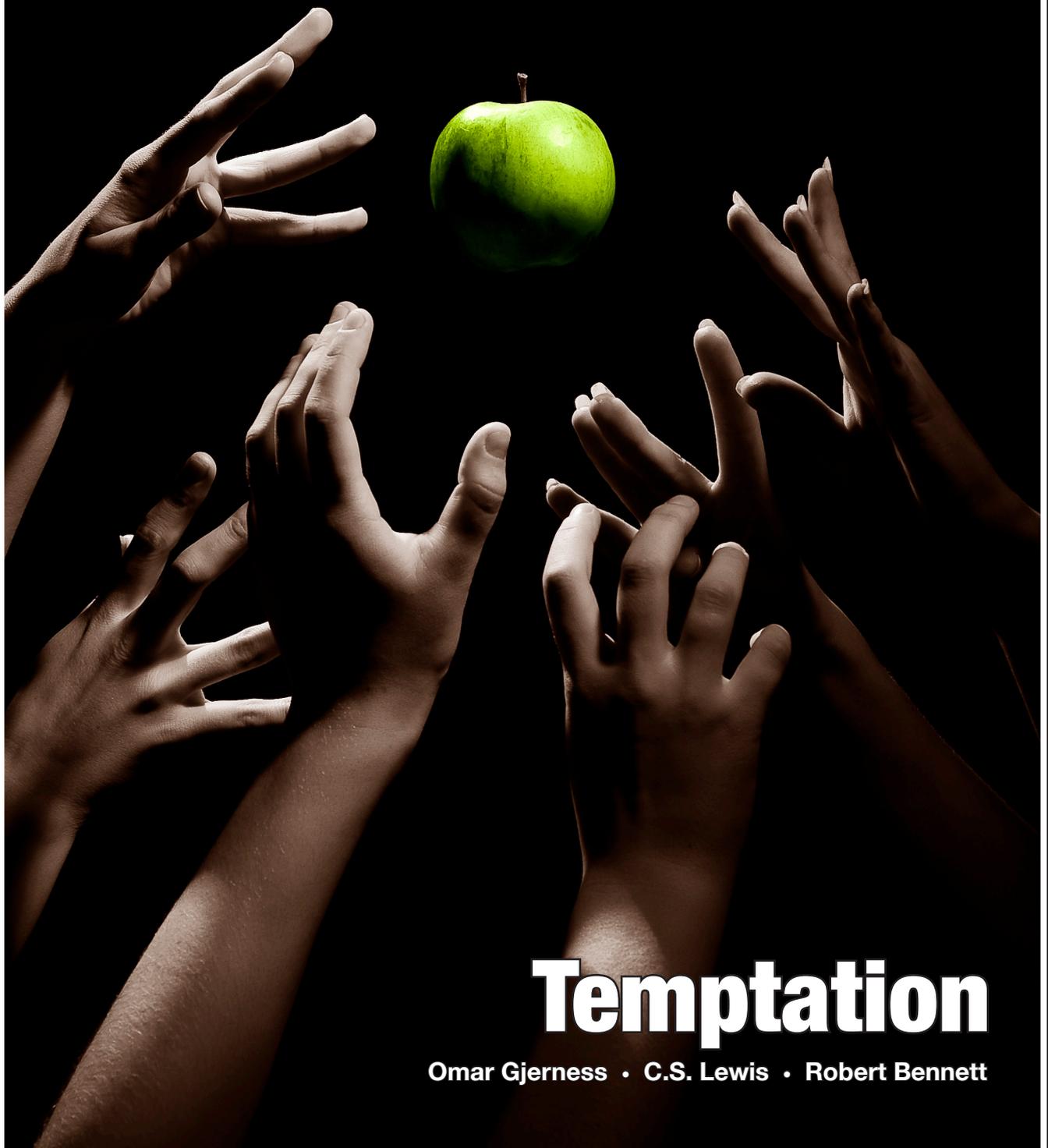


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Temptation

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Quiet Moments

Soul Nourishment

H.E. WISLØFF

God’s Word is the soul-nourishment needed for a life with God. God’s Word, therefore, is rightly called a means of grace. Without his Word it is impossible to continue a life of grace.

Determination and good works, prayer and wrestling against sin, will not avail. It is only God’s means of grace that can create new life and sustain that which is created. God does not expect that you can be victorious over evil except by the help of the means of grace.

Man lives by every Word which comes from the mouth of God. You are not assured that you will always feel warmed



Rigmor Dahl Delphin/Oslo Museum

and edified by the Word. You may feel that the Word condemns and humbles you. The Word is effective independent of your feelings.

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

Hans Edvard Wisløff (1902—1969) was a Norwegian theologian and writer. He was also the Bishop of the Diocese of Sør-Hålogaland from 1959 until his death in 1969.

Wisløff, H.E., Quiet Moments on the Way Home. Fergus Falls, MN: Faith & Fellowship Press, 1993.

The CLB Prayer Team is on-call to pray for requests from our family of churches. E-mail: pray@prayclb.org

Born Rebel

TROY TYSDAL

The idea of serving the devil is something that does not appeal to most people. Few people actually set out to serve Satan, but Satan knows this as well. If you look at Satan in Scripture, and if you listen to the church of Satan today, the message is not “serve the devil.” Rather the message is, and has always been, “serve yourself.” Serving ourselves is something that appeals to us. After all, it was pride that brought sin into this world, and it is pride that puts us on a direct collision course with God. The Bible tells us, “God opposes the proud” (James 4:6).

In the Garden of Eden Satan did not say “Follow me!” to Adam and Eve. He simply offered them personal gain, a chance to be like God, and they jumped at it. The Bible tells us their sin brought a curse on all creation. The Apostle Paul writes “...through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners” (Romans 5:19).

Simply put, we are born rebels. It’s in our genes to desire to be like God, to live as if there is no God. We are born in the grasp of Satan, imprisoned by our pride, lost in our sin and destined for hell. So, what hope do we have?

Jesus, after his baptism by John in the Jordan River, was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert. There he was tempted by Satan, in order that he might pass the test Adam and Eve had failed. After he cast Satan away, Jesus began his public ministry preaching a message of repentance.

MATTHEW 4:12-17

When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on



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those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Repentance is something we talk about, but the word is often misunderstood. The Greek word used in Matthew’s Gospel is far richer than just feeling remorse or regret for what we’ve done. It literally means to think differently, to come to a new mind. Jesus is not just asking us to regret our sin; he is also challenging us to see things differently—to see things from God’s perspective.

I think God opposes the proud because the proud are the least likely to admit that they are wrong. The proud will hang on as long as they can to the illusion that they are *like God*. It reminds me of an old western where the outlaws are surrounded with no chance of escape. Think, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

Legend has it they were hiding out in South America when they robbed the courier of a silver mine. They took refuge at a boarding house along the way and soon found themselves surrounded by members of the Bolivian Army. A gunfight ensued. Reality is often less exciting than fiction. In reality, Butch

Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were both wounded in the gunfight and are thought to have committed suicide to avoid capture. But Hollywood’s version is much more exciting. In the movie, the outlaws realize they are surrounded, load their pistols, burst out the front door side by side with their guns blazing, and they are shot down in a moment of glory.

That’s an option for the proud. You can do that! You can refuse the free gift of salvation and you can burst into eternity with your guns blazing, believing you are like God. The original rebel, Satan, will be right by your side, and your fate will be the same as his.

Or you can humbly surrender, and receive the salvation won for you by Jesus Christ at the cross. Surrender is terrifying for the proud, for the rebel, because surrender means you will stand before the judge. But I can promise you this: Jesus Christ, the one who came to serve and not to be served, will be standing by your side. Jesus said, “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). Simply put, repent, believe, and by the power of Christ you will be saved.

Rev. Troy Tysdal is Church Resource Coordinator for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



Satan: Alive and Well

OMAR GJERNES

Forty to fifty years ago, North America took a great interest in the occult and Satanism. This was prompted by multiple events.

In 1966 Anton LaVey founded the First Church of Satan. His book, the *Satanic Bible*, followed two years later. Through his “church,” LaVey promoted a lifestyle of indulgence, vengeance and self-gratification. As a result, many from around the nation joined him.

In 1966 and 1967 Timothy Leary toured college campuses promoting the use of the drug LSD for spiritual enlightenment. During that same period of time he founded the League for Spiritual Discovery, a religious movement with LSD as its holy sacrament.

In 1969 the Manson family was linked

to a string of murders in the Los Angeles area. Their vision was to trigger a race war between blacks and whites that would launch the US into chaos. In his book *Helter Skelter*, Vincent Bugliosi documented the fact that Charles Manson borrowed philosophically from the Process Church of the Final Judgment, a cult known for worshiping both Jesus and Satan.

In 1971 William Blatty wrote a book called *The Exorcist*. A movie of the same title soon followed. It was a frightening and ugly story of a young girl who suffered from demon possession. It was based on a true story. In many theaters, viewers fainted from fright.

In the middle of this furor, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship invited me to

speak on the subject of the occult and Satanism at conferences in both Billings and Bozeman, Montana. These speaking engagements began an interesting journey for me. I suddenly had contact with several people who related their occult experiences to me. In addition, I received over sixty invitations to speak on the occult and Satanism from coast to coast, including television, radio and press.

Since that time, the preoccupation with the occult has died down. (I’m glad the trip is over—I’d much rather talk about Jesus than the devil). But that does not mean that Satan is easing up on his nefarious work in North America or around the world.

Satanism has existed from the beginning

“Rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”

Revelation 12:10-12

of history and it still exists today. I believe Satan, as he always does, has simply changed his tactics. His methodology of the 1970s and 80s produced more fear than disciples. Satan does not like to be in the limelight. In the light he walks in light, and in the darkness he walks in darkness.

The devil’s new approach in his attack on humankind is subtle, and it has been far more successful than in the past.

How has the devil succeeded? In many ways!

First, we see Satan’s attack on the family, by a multitude of avenues, including divorce, cohabitation, homosexual union, abortion and child abuse.

Second, we see the effect that drugs have had on our society. In some instances we even see state and federal governments working against each other, divided over the issue of legalization.

Third, we see the desire in our society for material things. We are a people driven by a want for more. We are fixated on building up treasure in this world.

Fourth—and perhaps the most subtle of them all—the strongest tool of Satan is religion itself. Reading the Old Testament, we see that when God judges

Israel, the first sin that is mentioned is idolatry.

In 1 Corinthians 10:20, Paul tells us that a sacrifice to a false god is an offering to the devil. And, sad to say, even Christians inadvertently do the devil’s work from time to time. When Peter reprimanded Jesus, Jesus said it was Satan speaking through Peter (Matthew 16:23).

In Acts 4:12 we are told, “There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

This exclusiveness is not tolerated in our age, when we are taught that there are many approaches to God. To claim that we have absolute truth is viewed as the height of intolerance. This is in spite of the fact that there is one Truth, and that Truth is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the *way* and the *truth* and the *life*. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Francis Schaeffer observed that our present society has not only turned its back on Truth, but on the very concept that truth exists. Truth has become subjective. “You have your truth and I have mine,” and in many cases the Church has bought into this lie.

Behind all of this is the sinister figure of

Satan. We are tempted by the world and our own flesh, but behind all temptation is the person of Satan.

Ephesians 6:11-12 tells us, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

We are involved in the ultimate battle between good and evil. Temptation comes at the Christian from every direction. It may be subtle. Satan attacks when we are weak and where we are weak. Know your weaknesses, and guard against them. When Christ faced temptation he turned to Scripture. Remember where your hope is found and that your victory is won in Christ.

Rev. Omar Gjerness graduated from Lutheran Brethren Seminary (LBS) in 1945. He has served Lutheran Brethren congregations in Montana, Saskatchewan, New York and California. In 1962 he became professor of systematic theology at LBS, and in 1984 he became president of LBS. Pastor Gjerness retired in 1993 and lives in Fergus Falls, MN.



In September 1961, an English teacher at Fort Hamilton High School in Brooklyn, New York challenged his class to write a letter to an author they had recently read. One of the students was Harvey Karlsen, a member of 59th Street Lutheran Brethren Church and a senior at Fort Hamilton High School.

Harvey had just finished reading a creative and insightful book on temptation by C.S. Lewis. The book, *The Screwtape Letters*, is a series of letters written by a high ranking demon named Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood, a younger and less experienced demon.

On September 24, 1961, having been warned not to expect a response, Harvey sat down and penned a letter to the famous author and Oxford professor.

Dear Sir:

I have read your book titled *The Screwtape Letters* and it brings a question to mind. I, too, have received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and I realize the power Satan has. My question is: when you wrote *The Screwtape Letters*, did Satan give you any trouble, and if he did, what did you do about it?

I would appreciate it if you would tell me this and at the same time give me some instruction as to what one should do when temptation occurs.

Sincerely yours,

Harvey Karlsen

Rev. Harvey Karlsen is an Ordained Pastor in the Church of the Lutheran Brethren serving with InterFACE Ministries, a nonprofit educational Christian organization that networks international students and scholars with culturally sensitive Americans who enjoy the open exchange of ideas.

Gently Apply the Brakes

C.S. Lewis

On the 13th day of October, 1961, C.S. Lewis sat down to write a response to the young student from Fort Hamilton High School in Brooklyn, New York.

Dear Mr. Karlsen:

Your letter did not reach me till today. Of course I have had and still have plenty of temptations. Frequent and regular prayer, and frequent and regular communions are a great help, whether they *feel* at the time as if they are doing you good or whether they don't. I also found great help in monthly confession to a wise old clergyman.

Perhaps, however, the most important thing is to *keep on*; not to be discouraged however often one yields to the temptation, but always to pick yourself up again and ask forgiveness. In reviewing your sins, don't either exaggerate them or minimize them. Call them by their ordinary names and try to see them as you would see the same faults in somebody else—no special blackening or whitewashing.

Remember the conditions on which we are promised forgiveness; we shall always be forgiven provided that we forgive all who sin against us. If we do that we have nothing to fear. If we don't, all else will be in vain.

Of course there are other helps which are mere commonsense. We must learn by experience to avoid either trains of thought or social situations, which *for us* (not necessarily for everyone) lead to temptations. Like motoring—don't wait till the last moment before you put on the brakes but put them on gently and quietly, while the danger is still a good way off.

I would write at more length but I am ill. God bless you.

Yours sincerely,

C. S. Lewis.

Two years later, on November 22, 1963, at the age of 64, C.S. Lewis died of kidney failure. In 1971 (approx.) Walter Hooper, C.S. Lewis' private secretary, took out an advertisement in Christianity Today. The advertisement stated that C.S. Lewis had a habit of personally responding to those who wrote to him, and that the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England was compiling a collection of those letters. Harvey Karlsen sent his handwritten letter from C.S. Lewis to Oxford, where it remains to this day.

In March 1992, Harvey Karlsen was invited to Walter Hooper's home for tea. During their conversation, Mr. Hooper told Pastor Karlsen that he had read many letters penned by C.S. Lewis and yet he had not seen Jack (as he was known to his friends) address the subject of temptation as clearly and concisely as he had in his letter to Harvey.

C.S. Lewis was a novelist and Christian apologist born in Belfast, Ireland. He held positions at both Oxford University and Cambridge University. He is best known for his books The Screwtape Letters, The Chronicles of Narnia, The Space Trilogy, Mere Christianity, Miracles and The Problem of Pain.

40 Years of Terror

 **LBS J-Term Speaker: ROBERT BENNETT**

Most of what we pastors know about our members comes from informal settings—over a cup of coffee in their homes, alongside the hospital bed, or at a wedding reception. As a pastor of a church of more than a thousand members, I conduct a lot of weddings. Normally, I also attend the wedding receptions to say a prayer before the meal, which gives me an opportunity to get to know my church members better. But a casual conversation at one particular wedding reception caught me a bit off guard. I present the conversation below in its entirety:

Member: Sorry that my husband and I missed church last week, pastor. We were out of town.

Me: No problem. I am sure you attend church somewhere else when you travel...

Member: Well... No, we didn't make it to church this time.

Me: OK, but you look like you want to tell me something.

Member: Ah... Pastor, I went to a paranormal conference last weekend.

Me: Why would you do that?

Member: You see, pastor, we have ghosts in our home. They are very nice ghosts. They are the ghosts of two small children who died in a house fire more than a hundred years ago.

Me: We need to sit down and talk about this... Can you come see me in the office this week?

Member: Sure, I would like to do that. I tried to speak to one of our previous pastors about the situation, but he seemed to think there was something wrong with me and my family. Finally, he said that if I wanted help I should probably go talk to a Roman Catholic priest.

Me: No, there is nothing wrong with you. Let's sit down and talk about these things.

Member: Thank you. I have been looking for help for so long...

Well, that is how this story began. It

is very sad that members of Christian churches in America cannot get help from their pastors in areas that should be considered general pastoral care. Yet, this has been a problem for about the last hundred years in Western society. Rationalism and secularism have had devastating effects upon the Christian Church and its pastors. I discuss some of these causes in my book, *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare*, but for now let me simply say that this remains a problem in our churches.

One of the most publicly recognized cases inspired the movie, *The Exorcist*. The movie was based on real events that took place in St. Louis, Missouri. It is not widely known that before the Roman Catholic Church was charged with the exorcism, the Lutheran Church had already failed.

Why did the Lutherans fail and the Roman Catholics succeed in delivering the young boy (movie version was a girl)? Darrell McCulley wrote and self-published a wonderful book titled, *The House Swept Clean: A Biblically Balanced Pattern for Diagnosis, Exorcism, and Pastoral Care of the Victims of Demonic Possession*.¹ While this book is no longer in print, the PDF version can still be found. McCulley investigates the exorcism in St. Louis and describes how the Lutheran pastors failed. The Lutheran pastors simply had no idea what to do. They had not been trained to deal with the demonic. They did not even believe demonic possession to be possible. How many people have suffered under the power of the devil because Christian clergy have failed to proclaim the freedom of Jesus, who breaks the bonds of Satan?

"Why did you go to the paranormal conference?" I asked the couple sitting in my office the week after the wedding reception. The woman replied, "Because the pastor would not help me and I did not want to go to a Roman Catholic priest. It was the only other option I

could think of..." At that time in my ministry I was surprised that a member of my church would seek counsel in such a non-Christian setting. However, I have learned since then that many Christians engage in such activities to find answers that they are not receiving from the Church. "So what did you learn at the paranormal conference?" Once again her response surprised me:

"I learned that these ghosts are good ghosts and that I should not be afraid of them. All I have to do is treat them nicely and ignore some of the antics and everything will be OK. So now when we see the two little children, we try to make contact with them. When they pull the sheets off the bed, we laugh. When they make noises, we just say, 'There go the kids again.'"

This did not sound right to me. As our conversation continued, I learned that the family was sometimes very afraid for their safety. I explained to them that there was no such thing as a ghost, so the spiritual activity they were experiencing could only be demonic. I think the woman was already aware of this. She'd been telling herself a lie because the truth was too terrifying.

We read New Testament passages together—Hebrews 9:27-28, "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him," and Philippians 1:23, "I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far..." Soon the family was convinced that the spirits that appeared to them as children were neither children nor ghosts, but were in fact demons. Mental illness or overactive imaginations could also have been explanations, but I discounted them because all of the family reported seeing and hearing the same things when they were gathered in the same room.

Now everyone in the family was in agreement that the problem was demonic in nature. I explained to them that the next step was a “house blessing,” which is actually another name for an exorcism. They agreed and we set an appointment for the exorcism.

“The day is finally here,” I thought as I drove up the driveway to the old farm house. The husband and wife met me at the door. “OK, pastor, where do we start?” I asked them to give me a tour of the house and to explain to me where they were seeing most of the spirits. We proceeded room by room. In each room I read various Scripture readings, prayed prayers declaring the lordship of Jesus, and requested that peace return in Jesus’ name. In the most problematic areas of the house I spoke the words, “Be gone in the name of Jesus Christ.”

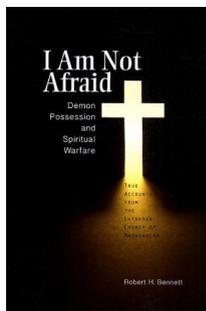
So, you ask, what was the experience like? It was plain and normal. There was nothing special, no spirits, no ghosts, no noises, absolutely nothing. So how do I know it worked? Because the family who had been stricken with fear for more than 40 years have not had a single strange encounter since the day of the exorcism. I write this almost five years after the incident and the house remains quiet and peaceful to this day. Jesus remains the defeater of sin, death and the devil. Too often we forget where our real help lies. There is safety in the name of Jesus.

Dr. Robert Bennett is Administrative Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Reese, Michigan, and Adjunct Professor of Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Buy the Book!

I Am Not Afraid is Dr. Robert Bennett’s fascinating first-hand account of spiritual warfare found within the Lutheran Church of Madagascar.

Available at: www.amazon.com
and: www.cph.org



Visit Dr. Bennett’s blog at www.iamnotafraidblog.com

’Darrell Arthur McCulley, The House Swept Clean: A Biblically Balanced Pattern for the Diagnosis, Exorcism, and Pastoral Care of the Victims of Demonic Possession (St. Louis: Darrell A. McCulley, 2002), PDF, 5.



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Temptation

ROY HEGGLAND

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6:10, ESV).

In Psalm 119, David wrote about the Word of God, the Law of the Lord, to which he attributed a long list of good things. A central theme of that Psalm is that the Word is able to keep us from sinning when we hide it in our hearts. Listen to these verses from Psalm 119 as David recounts the place of the Word in his life:

“Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!”

“Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments.”

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.”

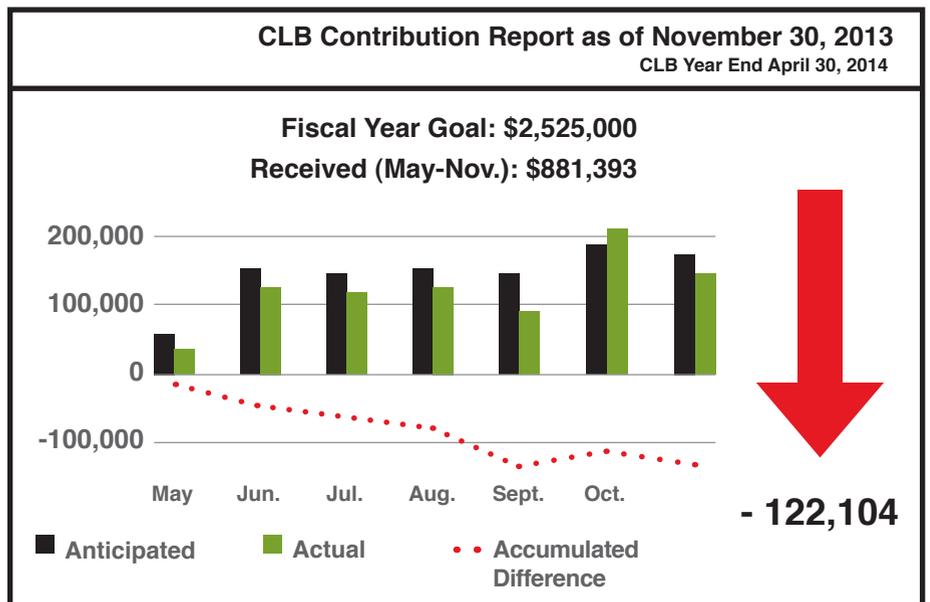
“I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

“Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.”

“If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.”

“Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.”

“Through your precepts I get



understanding; therefore I hate every false way.”

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

“Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.”

As we fill our hearts and minds with God’s Word, it begins to crowd out the things of this world. When we fix our eyes on God’s Word, we see more clearly the temptations of the devil, the world and our own flesh. When we meditate on God’s Word, it brings us knowledge and understanding. Through God’s Word we have been given new life. We are also continually given the power to walk in this new life as the Word brings light to our paths, understanding and wisdom to our minds, and joy to our hearts.

Although David does not directly talk about the dangers of loving money in

this Psalm, there are verses in Psalm 119 that reinforce this truth: Filling our hearts with the Word will displace our worldly desires.

“Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!”

“The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces. Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.”

May we, like David, be lovers of the Word and not lovers of money. May we be servants of the Word and not servants of the material blessings that God has given into our care.

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

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Common Ground

CHERYL OLSEN

Titus Women: It was fun to read this Facebook status of a young woman, “Learned amazing defense skills tonight, and had a ton of fun with the ladies of Hope! Community and fellowship come in many forms!”

Self-defense skills! It was the conversation among the older women at the morning Bible Study in Everett, Washington, as well as the buzz on Facebook from the younger crowd. Together, the night before, they had learned “hands-on” how to protect themselves, to be proactive, to be aware of their surroundings, and to move with confidence to prevent a confrontation. The instructor also demonstrated, with the help of two police officers, how to stay alive, if confronted by an attacker.

This was the fourth in a series of “Titus Women” gatherings—younger and older coming together for a common learning experience. First was making wreaths; second, jam and pie-making; third, making lefse; fourth, self-defense. It was clear from Facebook comments and conversations that they wanted the self-defense class repeated, perhaps scheduled as an outreach event. All ages agreed: this was great!

Spiritual applications abound. All of us have a common enemy in the devil who wants to attack us. We need to be aware, not giving in, fleeing temptation, learning to use the weapon of the Word of God.

Sewing group partnership: Halfway across the country, Community of Joy women in Eagan, Minnesota were also involved with an inter-generational project. Read what their local paper had to say: “On any Monday afternoon, one can find a handful of elderly women cutting fabric for baby clothes, hand-stitching quilts and crocheting baby blankets at The River Estates Senior Living Facility



Kjerstin Narvesen and seniors from The River Estates Senior Living Facility sew gifts for children in need.

in Burnsville. The women aren't sewing for friends or family, but for children in need through Bundles of Love, a Burnsville nonprofit that provides baby supplies for new mothers in need.

“Only a year old, the sewing group is the brainchild of 18-year-old Eagan resident Kjerstin Narvesen, who set out to bridge generations for a common good—an effort that recently earned her a Girl Scout Gold Award, the organization's highest honor. ‘I wanted to let seniors know they are important to the community by providing a meaningful activity for them,’ Narvesen said.”

Though Kjerstin is in college now, Community of Joy women continue to pick up donated fabric and yarn from Bundles of Love, sew once a week with the seniors at The River, and drop off their finished items for Bundles of Love to distribute to hospitals. Kjerstin's mom, Becky, says: “It gives us a chance to build relationships and give back to our community. Often when we think about

seniors we think about ministering to them instead of helping them to minister.

“I was thinking about the opportunity we now have to make baby items for a hospital in Chad. It may be a good way to include seniors in ministry. It is good to be reminded that our seniors are a valuable part of our community and to include them in ministry. One comment we hear almost every week from our group is how good it feels to be able to help someone else.”

Whether sharing new skills, or simply cutting out fabric together, women can find common ground. We need each other! God has gifted each of us for the good of the Body of Christ, and our communities.

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

For more information on the partnership between the women of Community of Joy and The River Estates Senior Living Facility visit www.wmclb.com.



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In Romans 12, the Apostle Paul warns us not to conform to the pattern of this world. This warning is easy to repeat. It comes quickly to our lips in the form of advice to others. However, I find it easier to repeat than it is to follow. Over and over again in Scripture we see people get into trouble when they conform by walking the path that the world lays out for them.

Consider two biblical examples: First, in the events described in Genesis 19, Lot was facing men from his city who were making requests he dared not fulfill. To protect his guests, he chose to offer an option that fit with the pattern of his community, Sodom. It did not turn out well for Lot and his family. Second, in the account found in Judges 13 – 16, Samson followed his heart, which is what our culture often tells us to do. On several occasions, Samson made choices with the goal of pleasing and impressing those around him, when he should have ignored their expectations and followed the Lord. As it was with Lot, Samson’s conforming

to the expectations of his culture did not turn out well for him either.

There are many examples, both in Scripture and in the world around us, of the folly of conforming to the patterns of the world. What I find most frustrating is that, even though I know how dangerous it is to conform, I find myself conforming anyway. I talk about being different, but all too often—when I examine my life closely—it looks quite similar to the lives of those in the world around me. Perhaps my conformity to the pattern of this world does not seem as spectacularly bad as that of Lot or Samson, but it is exactly the kind of thing that Paul warns against in Romans 12:2a. “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

I’ve recently had several conversations with high school students or their parents about what they should do after graduation. I suppose this is an occupational hazard for a teacher. But the conversations have led me to think about how influenced we are by the patterns of

the world. Our culture tells us that high school students are supposed to go right on to college. As parents, we worry about what we would say to our family and neighbors if our children did not head to college right after high school. Heading off to a traditional college has become this culture’s most common and expected choice. But I wonder if that always makes it wise.

Research indicates that, on average, college students in America change majors three times. Colleges and universities expect that many of these students will spend five or six years completing a four-year degree. In fact, less than half of students who enter a traditional four-year college right after high school will graduate within five years.

Please don’t misunderstand. I’m not opposed to college. In fact, I have several college degrees and each one has been very beneficial for me. However, I also taught for 13 years in a traditional four-year university and I saw many students

Renew Your Mind

TONY ROGNESS



who were there only because the culture told them that attending college was the thing to do. They were fulfilling a cultural expectation, conforming to the world's pattern. They were not responding to a call on their lives. Frankly, at times it was painful to watch. On the other hand, I saw many others who had a sense of calling. They were in college with a purpose and it was the right place for them at that time.

The difference between those two types of students is significant. The students without a sense of calling seemed to have little direction. In fact, if they were moving in any direction at all, the trajectory of their lives was difficult to identify. On the other hand, those who had a sense of God's call for their lives were characterized by a sense of purpose and a drive to fulfill their calling.

Perhaps it's worth considering an alternative to the world's pattern. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus calls his followers to "seek first [God's] kingdom and his righteousness" (6:33a). Seeking

the kingdom of God first will require us to examine every area of our lives. It will even drive us to re-imagine our post-high school choices. What if young people in transition—whether between high school and college, or at a transition point during college—took time away to intentionally seek the Lord, to study his Word, to prepare to hear and respond to his call on their lives? What if, instead of going to college because the culture says they are supposed to, they spent some time establishing the trajectory of their lives? Wouldn't that be much more in line with what Scripture teaches?

There are several places that offer young adults an opportunity to seek the Lord, study his Word and establish godly patterns for life. One of these is the CheckPoint program at Inspiration Point Christian Camp and Retreat Center. CheckPoint is a leadership and ministry training program for young adults. It's designed to teach young adults ministry and leadership skills in a context that is rich in the study of Scripture and ripe

with opportunities to serve. It is a great place to "seek first his kingdom," and to listen for, and hear, God calling. If you are a young adult who is considering God's calling on your life, or if you know of such a person, consider CheckPoint. It is a place that doesn't conform to the typical pattern of the culture we live in. But maybe that's a good thing.

Tony Rogness serves as CheckPoint Director at Inspiration Point.



For more information about CheckPoint, go to www.ipoint.org/about/checkpoint or e-mail Tony at tony@ipoint.org.

Kings, Fish, and Magic

MARCOS HOLZNER

Faith & Fellowship has been following the Journey of Danny and Mandy Bronson as they prepare for mission work among the Bilala people in Chad, Africa. Marcos Holzner worked among the Bilala people from 2001-2011. He is currently on home assignment. In this article Marcos shares some insight into the people Danny and Mandy will live among.

Though the Bilala people have been Muslim for over five hundred years, the vast majority of them mix a great deal of belief in magic and appeasement of spirits with their religion. Islam has taught them that Allah, the One God, has already determined their destiny and that there is no mediator, no appeal. Having no other recourse, the Bilala turn to magic in an effort to control the spiritual and physical forces that they fear. For example, almost all Bilala men, women and children wear amulets. Certain herbs are wrapped in leather and then worn around the neck, hips or arms to protect against injury and disease. Verses from the Koran are also wrapped in leather and worn as amulets to bring good fortune and to protect the wearer from curses and evil spirits. *Pray* that all the Bilala will know that God loves them and has provided a mediator and savior for them—Jesus Christ.

For over six centuries, the Sultan has been the political leader of the Bilala people. While the Bilala were independent, the Sultan had absolute power. Though the modern government of Chad has reduced his authority, the Sultan continues to represent his people, advocating for them before the national government and defending their interests from other ethnic groups. On the basis of his traditional authority, he also remains the ultimate judge for the Bilala, hearing



The Sultan of Yao

appeals from his subjects outside his palace. The Sultan is not only the head of the Bilala, he is also the heart. He is the spiritual leader of his people, leading them in all important religious festivals. The Bilala have trusted and followed their kings for hundreds of years. *Pray* that the Sultan of Yao would come to know and follow Jesus as King, so that he can lead his people to Truth.

In the middle of a dry, dusty land that does not see rain for nine months out of the year, there is an area of green grass and forests surrounding Lake Fitri. The Bilala people have been calling this veritable paradise their home for centuries, and it has shaped them. Before settling here, they were semi-nomadic herders. The land surrounding Lake Fitri allows them to grow two crops of grain

per year, as well as vegetable gardens. This lake has transformed the Bilala not only into farmers, but more distinctly, into fishermen. They are the only fishing people in central and eastern Chad. They love to eat fresh fish, but most of their catch is smoked or dried and sold all over Chad. *Pray* that the Lord would now transform the Bilala into fishers of men and women.

Marcos Holzner lives in Fergus Falls, MN and works as a translator for Lutheran Brethren International Mission.

Bronson Family Update

Danny and Mandy are currently in Albertville, France engaged in language study. They are on schedule to move to Chad, Africa in July of 2014 with their three children, Ezekiel, Theo, and Jonah.

Items for Praise:

- Increased Comprehension
- Growing Stronger as a Family
- Multiple Learning Opportunities
- Good Health

Items for Prayer:

- The Bilala People
- Continued Growth in Study
- Boldness in Speaking French
- Continued Health

WHO'S NEXT?



Danny and Mandy Bronson have been called and commissioned to serve in Chad, Africa among the Bilala people. Danny is a 2010 graduate of Lutheran Brethren Seminary and has served as pastor of Birch Hills Community

Church and Saron Lutheran Church in Saskatchewan, Canada. Danny and Mandy have a passion to see lost people reached with the Gospel. They have three children, Ezekiel, Theo and Jonah.

www.LBIM.org



Lutheran Brethren International Mission

BRINGING THE GOOD NEWS TO UNREACHED PEOPLE

The Church of the Lutheran Brethren has identified three people groups in south central Chad: the Bagirmi, the Bilala, and the Fulbe. These people groups do not have a church planted among them and are 99% Muslim. We need three additional missionary units to join the three units already called to this crucial task. Who's Next?

Is God calling you? Contact Rev. Matthew Rogness: matthewr@CLBA.org

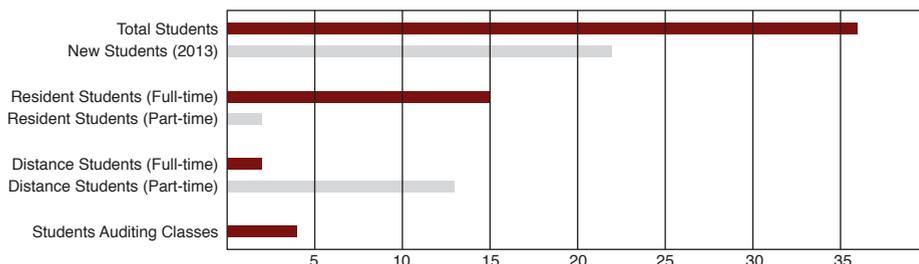
CHAD



- 11 Million People
- 14% Literacy
- 141 People Groups
- 72 Unreached People Groups
Unreached People: an ethnic group without an indigenous, self-propagating Christian church movement.

Enrollment Up **100%** From 2011

With 22 new students taking courses, enrollment at Lutheran Brethren Seminary is up 100% since 2011. Much of this increase is due to the new distance education program. Fifteen of the 36 students taking courses live in such places as Alberta, California, Colorado, Montana, Pennsylvania, New York, Saskatchewan, Washington, and Wisconsin.



Hearing the Call

BEN HOSCH

I grew up in a Christian environment. Church was an important part of our lives. Jesus was always a part of my life. I remember sitting with my mom outside of preschool one day and asking her some tough questions, at least tough questions for a preschooler to ask. She explained to me about the sacrifice of Christ, about the forgiveness of sins, and about eternal life. However much I understood that day, I asked Jesus into my heart.

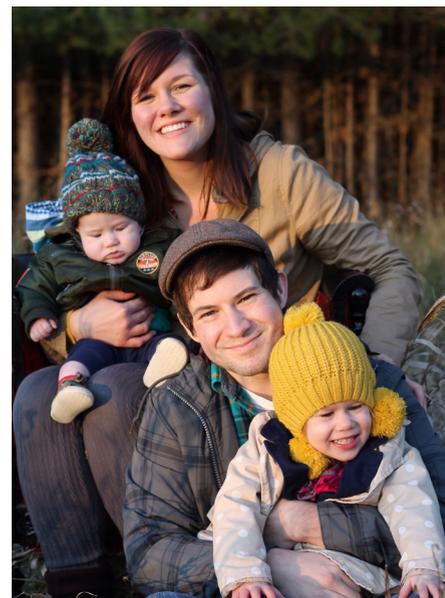
Although my story includes godly parents and grandparents, that does not mean life was easy. In fact, I became disillusioned with the Church during my high school and college years. But then God used my mom's battle with cancer to open me up to his calling. I spent one night praying about what I was supposed to do with my life. The answer wasn't a giant revelation with a big neon sign. It was just one word that both excited me and filled me with dread: ministry. Even after my mom lost her battle with cancer, God kept me focused on the ministry.

When I completed my bachelor's

degree, I knew that I wanted to attend seminary sometime in the future. But I wasn't ready to start that dream immediately. I needed a break. I found a job that I enjoyed, but then was laid off. A new job brought me to Fergus Falls. I felt that God was engineering my circumstances and that he was preparing me for more education. He has led me to seminary where I am ready to give three years of my life learning to be his servant.

I've already had some good experience in youth ministry, and I'm now getting valuable experience in congregational ministry serving at a church in the community. But in the long-term I sense that God is calling us to Taiwan to join the team reaching the Hakka people.

Our call to missions began when Sara and I were in college. We heard a presentation about missions in Europe. Afterwards we both sensed that God might be calling us. Then Sara began volunteering in the hospitality center for Asian students at the University of Minnesota. We became friends with some Chinese students and, in the process, God



The Hosch Family (L to R): Emery, Sara, Ben and Adelaide

gave us a love for Chinese people. Now it makes sense, Lord willing, that we would serve them with the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in Taiwan.

Ben Hosch is a first-year seminary student at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.

The Vision to Restart

JOHN HEIE

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Pasadena, California took the initiative to contact Regional Pastor Stan Olsen regarding the need to restart the congregation because of decreasing attendance. Rev. Olsen took the lead in crafting a detailed five-page Memorandum of Understanding on how to accomplish this effort.

This resulted in the formation of a Transitional Leadership Team (TLT) to carry out the restart. Rev. Olsen selected a team consisting mainly of people from the three Lutheran Brethren congregations in the area.

The TLT developed a vision statement for the restart church, together with a job description for the new pastor. Rev. Olsen led the search for a pastor, which eventually led to Kyle Sears.

Rev. Olsen has known Pastor Sears for over ten years, and Pastor Sears has already planted two churches in Texas. The TLT interviewed Pastor Sears twice, and then—with approval of the Immanuel congregation—called him. Kyle accepted the call and moved to Pasadena to start his work on July 3, 2013.

Pastor Sears is working, and will continue to work, in parallel with Immanuel's current pastor Steve Lazicki until the end of March 2014. At that time Pastor Lazicki will be retiring and Immanuel will cease operating as a church. Kyle and his family took up residence in the community that surrounds the church, because this is the target area reflected in the restart vision statement. His focus during this transition period is to make new contacts in the community and to nurture those contacts. For the time being, he is "bringing church to them" rather than "bringing them to church." The latter will come in time.



The Sears Family (L to R): Erika, Kathryn, Kylie, YoSeb and Kyle

Rev. Stan Olsen has had major involvement in recruiting a Ministry Team to support Pastor Sears. Rev. Olsen is searching for CLB members who are willing to move to Pasadena and join Pastor Sears in this restart effort. He is currently working on this in conjunction with Pastor Sears, meeting with him on a weekly basis to support and encourage his ministry.

The Pasadena Restart effort has been bathed in prayer since its inception, because we recognize that it is God who builds his house, not us (Psalm 127:1). There are currently 82 prayer warriors on the team, praying daily for this work.

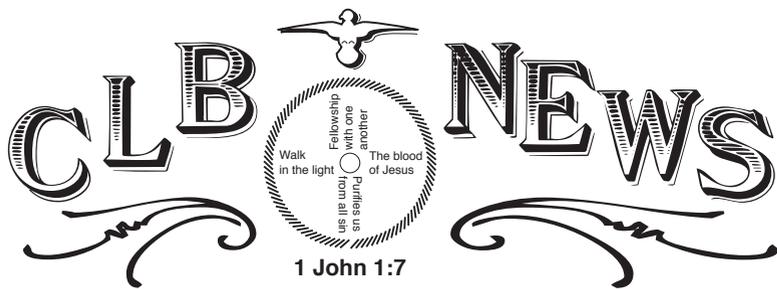
A key prayer item is the continuing recruitment of a Ministry Team. We invite you to join us in praying for and financially supporting this effort.

John Heie serves as the chair of the Transitional Leadership Team for the Pasadena Restart.

Join the Pasadena Prayer Team by contacting John Heie at johnheie@earthlink.net.



Watch the Video
www.clbnetwork.org/focus



J-TERM 2014

January 20-22

Bringing the Light to the Darkest Places

Lutheran Brethren Seminary will hold its annual J-Term Monday, Jan. 20 at 1:30 pm and continuing until Wednesday, the 22 at noon. The eight 90-minute lectures will take place at the Seminary, 815 W. Vernon Ave., Fergus Falls, MN.

On Monday, President Joel Egge will give a CLB Ministry of Advancement presentation and Missionary Dan Venberg will follow with A Call to Ministry to Muslims.

Tuesday, our presenter will be Dr. Robert Bennett, the Administrative Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Reese, MI, and Adjunct Professor of Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. Dr Bennett has served as a missionary in Madagascar. He will be speaking on the topic of Spiritual Warfare, based on his study and missionary experiences described in his book, *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare*. A spiritual warfare

panel discussion will take place Tuesday afternoon.

On Wednesday, Edward T. Welch, a counselor and faculty member at CCEF will speak on A Biblical Counseling Approach to Addictions. Dr. Welch earned a Ph.D. in counseling (neuropsychology) from the University of Utah. He counseled for over 30 years and has written extensively on the topic.

Also on Wednesday, Rev. Jim Erickson will tell of his personal ministry experience with Celebrate Recovery, a ministry he leads at Calvary Community Church (Fullerton, CA) for those suffering from “hurts, hang-ups, and habits.”

Tuition costs for J-Term are \$10/each session or \$75 for the entire J-Term. Retired pastors and their wives may attend tuition-free. For more information or to register, please call (218) 739-3375.

We look forward to seeing you in beautiful Minnesota this January.

Good News



Elders Brian Watts, Klaus Sperlich, Dennis Kantz, Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty, Pastor Mike Edwards

On November 17, 2013, Dennis Kantz was ordained as elder and Klaus Sperlich was installed as elder at Good News Lutheran Brethren Church in McAlisterville, PA. Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty performed the ordination.

Job Opening

Our Redeemer’s Church in Minot, ND, is seeking someone to join our ministry team as our Children’s Ministry Director. This is a part-time (30 hours per week) position, but we will consider full-time applicants as well. If interested please contact Pastor Pete Pederson by 1/31/2014.

Phone: 701-838-0750

E-mail: ppederson@ourredeemers.org

Szobody Update

Carrie and Nathanael Szobody have spent the first five months of their time in Chad in Ndjamena. Just before Christmas, they left the Lutheran Brethren International Mission Welcome Center and moved their family southeast about eight hours to the village of Mafing. This is a Barma (Bagirmi) village where they will live and study and learn the Bagirmi language and culture. Nathanael and Carrie have been called by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren to be part of a church planting

team among these people. We don’t necessarily see them making Mafing their home, but it is certainly a great place to do language and cultural learning. Join us in praying for them as they adjust to village life. Pray for good health, good language helpers and a growing love for the Bagirmi people to whom they have been called to minister.

Rev. Matthew Rogness is Director of Lutheran Brethren International Mission.

MATTHEW ROGNESS



The Szobody Family (L to R): Nathanael, Cyril, Adelynn, Carrie and Selma



LIFTING OUR EYES

BEHOLD, THE KING IS COMING! - JOHN 12

CLB BIENNIAL CONVENTION

JULY 30 - AUGUST 1, 2014

Presidential Candidates

The Council of Directors (COD) of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB) respectfully submits as nominees for the Office of President, Rev. Paul Larson and Rev. Jeffrey Seaver. The election will be held at the 2014 Biennial Convention.

The COD's Presidential Search Committee prayerfully sought out candidates with outstanding records of leadership who would faithfully seek God's will for the CLB, boldly cling to God's Word, and humbly lead the CLB in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The COD feels strongly that both Pastor Larson and Pastor Seaver fit the criteria. The Council is grateful that Pastor Larson and Pastor Seaver have agreed to be nominated for this office.

More information about the candidates will be presented in the coming months.

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REV. PAUL LARSON
Bethesda LBC, Eau Claire, WI



I was born in Clearbrook, MN and raised in my faith at Elim LBC. After high school, I attended our CLB Bible College. I graduated from Rocky Mountain College in Billings, MT, where I served Yellowstone LBC as youth director. In 1988 I graduated from Lutheran Brethren Seminary with an M.Div. I was a church-planting pastor at Word of Life LBC in CO. I later served Calvary Community Church in CA. Currently, I am the CLB Council of Directors secretary. My wife Bee and our five children live in Eau Claire, WI, where I have been privileged to serve as senior pastor of Bethesda LBC for eleven years. The CLB has shaped my life; I am eager to see her part in the advance of God's coming kingdom!

REV. JEFF SEAVER
Triumph LBC,
Moorhead, MN/West Fargo, ND



I was born in Minneapolis and baptized into Christ at Ebenezer Lutheran Church. God blessed me with parents who love me and raised me in a Gospel-centered home in LeSueur, MN. After graduation from Hillcrest Academy in Fergus Falls, MN ('75), I received a Bachelor of Science degree from Mankato State University ('79), a Master of Divinity degree from Lutheran Brethren Seminary ('84), and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Bethel Seminary ('03). My wife Kathie and I have four adult children, one son-in-law, and twin grandsons. We live in Moorhead, MN and have served Triumph Lutheran Brethren Church since 1984.

re:Think

by: Brent Juliot

Flip the Script

Temptation just shows up. Whether it comes from the tempter himself or from our own sinful nature, how can we overcome it? C.S. Lewis and others give us good advice. All agree that the Word of God is key.

Remember when Jesus experienced direct face-to-face temptation by Satan? Three times Satan raised issues and “opportunities,” and three times Jesus responded by quoting appropriately from the Word of God. Contrast this with Satan’s original tempting conversation with Eve (and Adam, who was with her—Genesis 3:6). Satan questioned the accuracy and truth of God’s Word. “Did God really say—did he really mean—that you would die if you ate that forbidden fruit? God is deceiving you. He doesn’t want you to know what he knows. He’s keeping something good from you!” Our first parents couldn’t answer, believed the lie, and the rest is history.

But when Satan tried out his insinuations on Jesus, Jesus took the temptation script from the Garden of Eden and flipped it completely. All Jesus had to say to Satan was what God the Father had already said in his Word. That answer was more than sufficient. How wonderful that Jesus has shown us how to use the sword of the Word of God! (See Ephesians 6:17.)

We might be tempted to assume that God’s primary purpose behind Jesus’ encounter with Satan is for our instruction. But is it?

No. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). He didn’t need to be baptized, but he did so to identify with us sinners. Then Jesus faced Satan’s tempting as our representative and, unlike our first parents, he won. Finally, three years later, the sinless Son of God died in place of us sinners on the cross.

Jesus didn’t just flip the temptation script. He flipped the WHOLE script. Listen to the Apostle Paul in Romans 5, verses 15 and 18: “But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! ...Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.”

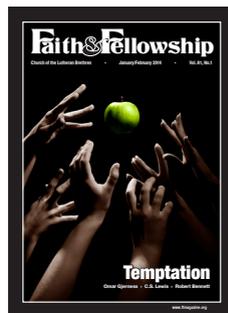
Two people, two actions, two results. Adam sins and all die. Jesus dies and there is life again for all who believe. Adam got the story backwards and we had to accept it as normal. Jesus rewrote the story and restored the normalcy of God’s will.

Temptation? As Adam’s children, we couldn’t win. But in Christ, who flipped the script, we can.

Rev. Brent Juliot teaches math at Hillcrest Lutheran Academy, and serves as senior pastor at Stavanger Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, MN.

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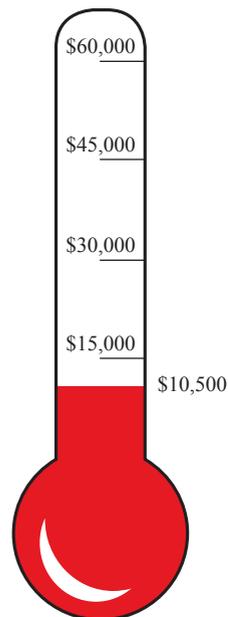
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