

ELS Newsletter

Our Bethany Lutheran College

Following the Bethany Lutheran College daily chapel service on February 5, 2024, eighteen people were recognized for milestones of service to Bethany and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. We thank God for the service of all of these people to Bethany and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.



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Dear Members and Friends of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod,

I remember that as a young man I was frustrated with my life of sanctification. I saw that outside the Lutheran Church other Christians seemed to behave themselves better than I. So I dabbled in some of those theologies, but Luther's explanation of the Third Article kept running through my mind in opposition to what I was hearing: *"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith ..."*

Perhaps you find yourself being disappointed in your sanctified living as well. That, of course is only natural, since you will struggle with your old sinful nature until the day you die. Recently in my reading I came across this quote from an author who remembered something his homiletical (sermon writing) professor once said: *"Sanctification is descriptive rather than prescriptive. It's something that happens to you rather than something you do. Our people need to be encouraged to be what they are.' Telling them to be better doesn't make them so. Proclaiming Jesus, and their new identity in him, does."* (*Spiritual Warfare*, by Harold Ristau, Lexham Press, 2022, pp.23-24.)

I have even heard that while Lutherans beat the Baptists in regard to justification; Baptists beat the Lutherans in regard to sanctification. This is absolutely untrue. Our growth in sanctified living is always and only the work of the Spirit as He brings Jesus and his gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation to us through the proclaimed word and sacraments. The more we grow in our faith the more we see ourselves as sinners and the greater Jesus becomes in our understanding of all that He has done to save us. Now we get to be who we already are in Jesus, cleansed and declared holy before the Father. Thanks be to Jesus and the ongoing work upon us through His Spirit!

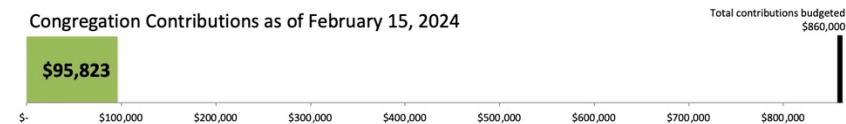
Glenn Obenberger

Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya Update

The ELDK conducted a Pastors' Conference from Jan. 15 to 18, 2024. Some Evangelical Lutheran Synod clergy delivered instructive presentations via zoom on a variety of topics: Prs David Jay Webber, Jacob Kempfert, Steven Sparley and Pres. Timothy Hartwig. Pres. Gwachi Evans expressed his thankfulness for the friendship with the ELS in helping its church body to grow confessionally through the teachings of these faithful ELS men. Its relationship with the ELCK remains a vexing problem with charges of trespassing and even purported assault. Pray for our brothers and sisters in this young confessionally Lutheran church body as they seek boldly and faithfully to preach Christ and Him crucified in their communities. Further dialogue will take place soon between the two presidents through the ELS-ELDK Liaison Committee exploring possibly additional assistance with seminary training in Kenya.

Upcoming Events

March 18-19 – Doctrine Committee
April 1 – BORAM report deadline
April 16-17 – Board for World Outreach
April 17 – Board for Home Outreach



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Theological Education Online Conference

The Global Theological Education Commission (GTEC) of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) successfully hosted its first online conference for CELC theological educators around the world on February 1–3, 2024. Dr. Timothy Schmeling serves on the GTEC as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod’s representative. Our entire Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary faculty was able to attend the online conference. May the Lord continue to allow the GTEC to hold such conferences in the future and find new ways to support Confessional Lutheran seminary education around the globe. You can read more at <https://celc.info/2024/01/11/online-conference-for-celc-theological-educators-february-1-3-2024/>

MN Human Rights Act Update

In 2023 the MN legislature changed the MN Human Rights Act by adding the phrase "gender identity" without attaching a religious exemption to it as it had to "gender orientation." It was assumed that this was "an oversight" and could be easily corrected in this current legislative session. Over a number of months after signing a letter on behalf of the ELS along with other religious organizations requesting the correction, it has become clear that it was no oversight (this has been confirmed by the Governor's office) but something intentional. This potentially opens our churches and schools to significant legal liability. Once again on behalf of the ELS we have signed onto a letter in support of this legislative proposal to insert appropriate exemption language to the MN HRA making the case for the exemption.

2024 Synod Convention

“Walk Circumspectly in the World God So Loves”; essayist: Rev. James Braun. Rev. Andrew Burmeister will serve as convention chaplain. We will consider the various hollow and deceptive philosophies that have troubled the Church of our Lord Jesus throughout its history, as well as more current ones that are influencing the Christian’s proper understanding of the Word of God today. While raising the awareness of these insidious encroachments upon the teachings and practices of the Church, we will also remember that Jesus came not to condemn, but to save the world. So too as His Church, while walking circumspectly, we need clearly to demonstrate our love and compassion for all, especially those neighbors who have been deluded by such common and error-laden approaches to spirituality Col. 2:6-8 & 4:5-6 are pertinent to this topic.

Installations



Rev. Daniel Basel (center front) at Faith, Hillman MI (he also serves Trinity in Rogers City)



Rev. David Thompson (third from left) in BLC’s Trinity Chapel as Director of the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews



Rev. Michael Dale (center front) at Pinewood, Burlington, MA