



IT IS WRITTEN: "One is Your Father, He who is in heaven." Matthew 23:9

LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

Our Father,

BY WHOSE NAME
ALL FATHERHOOD IS KNOWN

SYNOD CONVENTION 2026

JULY-AUGUST 2026



LUTHERAN SENTINEL

Photo credit: Rev. Paul Fries

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Question ...

I was always taught that the Bible doesn't contradict itself. But when I read the accounts of Jesus' resurrection, some of the details appear to conflict with each other. How can we know that the four Gospels are reliable?

Answer:

Skeptics have repeatedly tried to cast doubts on the reality of Christ's resurrection by drawing attention to various apparent contradictions. For example, the Gospels differ on the number of women who went out to the tomb. John only mentions Mary Magdalene (John 20:1), while Matthew states that two women went out to the tomb (Matthew 28:1). Meanwhile, in Mark's Gospel, it's three women (Mark 16:1). "So," the skeptic argues, "which is it? One woman, two women, or three women?"

Believers, however, need not accept this line of skeptical reasoning. First of all, these "contradictions" are not real contradictions. Though some details differ, one can easily harmonize the narrative thread of all four Gospels. Why does John mention only Mary Magdalene? John, fully aware of the Gospels written earlier by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, wants to add a previously unrecorded account. He does not deny that other women were there; however, his focus is solely on Mary's special encounter with the risen Jesus.

In fact, the differences between the Gospels do not undermine their message, but bolster their testimony. Christian apologist Craig Parton, in his book *The Defense Never Rests: A Lawyer's Quest for the Gospel*, points out that "identical statements by witnesses is one of the surest signs of collusion." When eyewitnesses say exactly the same thing with all of the same details, they probably got together ahead of time to "get their story straight." Yet the four Gospels highlight their authenticity in the ways that they differ. John points out that "Jesus, in the presence of His disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book" (John 20:30). Neither John nor the other Gospel writers claim that their accounts of Jesus' life and ministry are all-encompassing.

The bigger question is this: are the apostles and evangelists trustworthy? By pointing out so-called "contradictions," skeptics want believers to question the truthfulness of the Gospel writers themselves. Yet in the four Gospels we find a rare honesty as the disciples present themselves not as heroes, but as struggling sinners like the rest of us. In John's account of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples hid behind locked doors in fear of the Jews (John 20:19). Luke states that when the women returned from the empty tomb, the disciples refused to listen to them (Luke 24:11). The risen Jesus even rebukes the disciples for being slow to believe (Luke 24:25).

Finally, we trust in the testimony of the Holy Spirit Himself found in the Holy Scriptures, which assures us that we have a completely reliable source. In his second letter, Peter, under the Spirit's inspiration, writes, "To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty...No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:16, 20-21, EHV).



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2026 Convention Highlights & Ten Questions for Two New Brothers



Do not let the photo on the right fool you; I was awake and alert throughout this year's eventful convention. **President Glenn Obenberger** bid farewell to the synod after five and a half years in office. **Rev. Alex Ring** gave a well-received essay on the convention theme: "Our Father, by Whose Name All Fatherhood Is Known." (Modified versions of the president's address and the

essay are printed for you in this issue.) **Rev. Michael K. Smith**, vice president of the synod and pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church in Ames, Iowa, was elected the next president. **Rev. Peter Faugstad**, who serves three parishes in and around New Hampton, Iowa, was elected vice president.



Pictured are four of the six pastors accepted into synodical membership at the convention. From L to R, starting behind Pres. Glenn Obenberger: Rev. Caleb VonDeylen, Lakewood, WA; Rev. Christopher Johnson, Wausau, WI; Rev. Kent Dethlefsen, Windsor, CA; Rev. Steven Gjerde, Wausau, WI.

On Tuesday morning, June 23, prior to those two elections, two congregations were welcomed into the synod: Eagle Lake Lutheran Church, a home mission in Eagle Lake, Minnesota, served by **Rev. Patrick Ernst**; and Zion Lutheran Church in Wausau, Wisconsin, which was founded in 1874. We will hear more about Eagle Lake in the next issue. Shameless geographical bias compels me to introduce you to Zion first.

For over a year, those of us in the northern Wisconsin circuit have been excited at the prospect of this historic church and her pastors, **Rev. Steven Gjerde** and **Rev. Christopher Johnson**, joining the ELS. Rev. Gjerde was

a guest at our pastors' conference last October and graciously hosted our monthly circuit meeting a few weeks later. Both pastors completed their colloquy (a formal process that determines whether or not a pastor agrees with a church body's doctrine and practice) on Palm Sunday this year and were unanimously recommended for membership in our synod.

I asked my two newest brothers ten questions about their ministry and the unique history of their parish. Here's what they had to say:

Ten Questions for Two New Brothers: *continued on pg. 6* ►



The altar of Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisc.

10 Questions for Two New Brothers

How did you two come to be pastors at Zion?

Steven Gjerde: In 2003, I was serving west of Wausau in a two-congregation rural parish. Zion called me to serve as associate pastor that year, and in 2009, I began service as senior pastor.

Chris Johnson: A few years later, we met each other through a group seeking to resist the ELCA's drift from Biblical authority. I was serving in Escanaba, Michigan, and Pastor Gjerde spoke on that group's behalf at the synod assembly. Later he attended an event I hosted at my congregation and spoke there, too.

SG: We had a mutual regard. When Zion needed a new associate pastor in 2018, Pastor Johnson's name emerged as the obvious candidate. We're very thankful God had a call for us to serve together.

What makes Zion important to the city of Wausau?

CJ: Zion is almost as old as Wausau itself and helped birth other Wausau congregations—

SG: Three of them, all Missouri Synod. We call Zion the “mother church” of Wausau Lutheranism.

CJ: —and even during her time in the ELCA, she was known for holding a traditional and dependable stance on doctrine, liturgy, and pastoral care.

SG: And education. Zion ran a parochial school for over 100 years. It closed in 2001.

CJ: And now it's opening a classical academy, named after St. David the King.

SG: Thanks be to God. Though Zion may be best known for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ on live radio every Sunday morning for almost 90 years.

Zion was formerly a member of the LCMC: Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ. Tell us what we should know about the LCMC.

What makes it a unique church body?

CJ: The LCMC has a fairly independent spirit.

SG: You might say it's a “free church” model that wants women's ordination and open Communion.

CJ: It was born out of controversies related to the ELCA's agreements with the Episcopal and Reformed churches.

SG: Yes, and it first formed as an association within the ELCA before the ELCA expelled it in the early 2000s.

CJ: Historically speaking, many LCMC congregations come from the old ALC (American Lutheran Church).

SG: We landed there as part of our exit from the ELCA in 2020, but we never “fit.” We're thankful to have had a place to land, but we're even more thankful to be entering where we belong.

What lies ahead for the LCMC? Will any of your LCMC friends follow your example and seek out the ELS?

SG: I would say there are pastors, in both the LCMC and the NALC (North American Lutheran Church), who would prefer more confessional pastures.

CJ: Many of them are still working through questions like creation, the roles of men and women, and closed Communion.

SG: One of our great hopes is that our membership in the ELS will start smoothing a path in this direction. We want them to know, “This can be done, and it's good!”

CJ: It's hard to know what the future holds for the

LCMC. There is no approved seminary. Some pastors attend non-denominational seminaries and have shaky theology.

When did you first become aware of the ELS?

CJ: I first heard of the ELS in a church history course taught at Luther Seminary. However, studying the ELS on a deeper level didn't happen until two years ago as Pastor Gjerde and I talked about Zion's future.

SG: I also heard of the ELS at Luther Seminary, and again on my vicarage in Cresco, Iowa, where U. V. Koren preached.

CJ: To be frank, I think everyone expected us to join the Missouri Synod. We expected that.

SG: It's true. Then, for whatever reason, I reached out to Jay Webber on Facebook and said, "I appreciate your online comments and that you come from the Wisconsin Synod." Well! I quickly learned otherwise! Both Jay and Paul Webber, like President Obenberger, Pastor Thompson, Pastor Rank, President Hartwig, and many others, were generous with their conversation, and as we read more, it changed everything. We heard clearly what had echoed in our prior study and dwelt in our own confession for years.

Have you ever eaten lutefisk? If so, describe the experience.

CJ: I never ate lutefisk. Perhaps someday! My grandfather, half-Norwegian and half-Swedish, detested it and so never made his family eat it once he moved from Marinette to Milwaukee.

SG: Yes, I've eaten it, although I liken it to Baptism: it happened once; it's unrepeatable; and I trust it offended the devil. I know our family in Norway once asked my immigrant grandparents why we, Americans, were still eating it.

What do you think makes the ELS worth joining?

SG: One evening, when I realized the ELS had me by the heart, I texted a WELS missionary friend and said, "Help! I've fallen in love with the ELS! Tell me all the reasons why I shouldn't join!" He wrote back, "Well, it's Biblical, and they have the best hymnal. Seminary and college are together, as they should be. Very nice people." "You're not helping," I said. I think he sent a smiley emoji.

CJ: I appreciate the spirit of peace and contentment, the sense of "this is who we are, have been, and always will be." The faith "that was once and for all delivered to the saints" is clear in the ELS, and that clarity is refreshing.

SG: In particular, that abiding, stalwart commitment to the doctrine of election.

CJ: Yes. We really believe the best is yet to come for the ELS. With all the theological confusion and

idolatry pervading this great land, here is the ELS, standing in the breach.

SG: Amen and amen! The ELS publicly confesses the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all its Biblical doctrines.

What has it cost you and your church to join the ELS?

CJ: President Obenberger hasn't sent us a bill yet, but whenever the bill comes, we will gladly pay it.

SG: Ha! Joining the ELS did cause us to lose some members, but against many expectations, it brought even more new members. Community criticism of Zion and her pastors has been sharp and unfair, but years of spiritual struggle with the ELCA prepared us for that. Personally, many of us find ourselves out of fellowship with family members. Thankfully, mutual understanding and love have prevailed.

What are the big plans at Zion right now?

SG: The forgiving Word and Sacraments of our Savior.

CJ: All the things God calls the church to do generation after generation.

SG: We want to rejoice in this new fellowship and share its blessing with our neighbors. This fall, Zion opens her new parish school, the Lutheran Classical Academy of St. David the King at Zion.

CJ: We look forward to sharing broader knowledge of the ELS and its ministries with our members. Zion hasn't had a strong association since it left the LCMS in 1979.

Last question: Can I have some more of those chocolate-covered coffee beans the next time you host our circuit meeting?

CJ: You most certainly can!

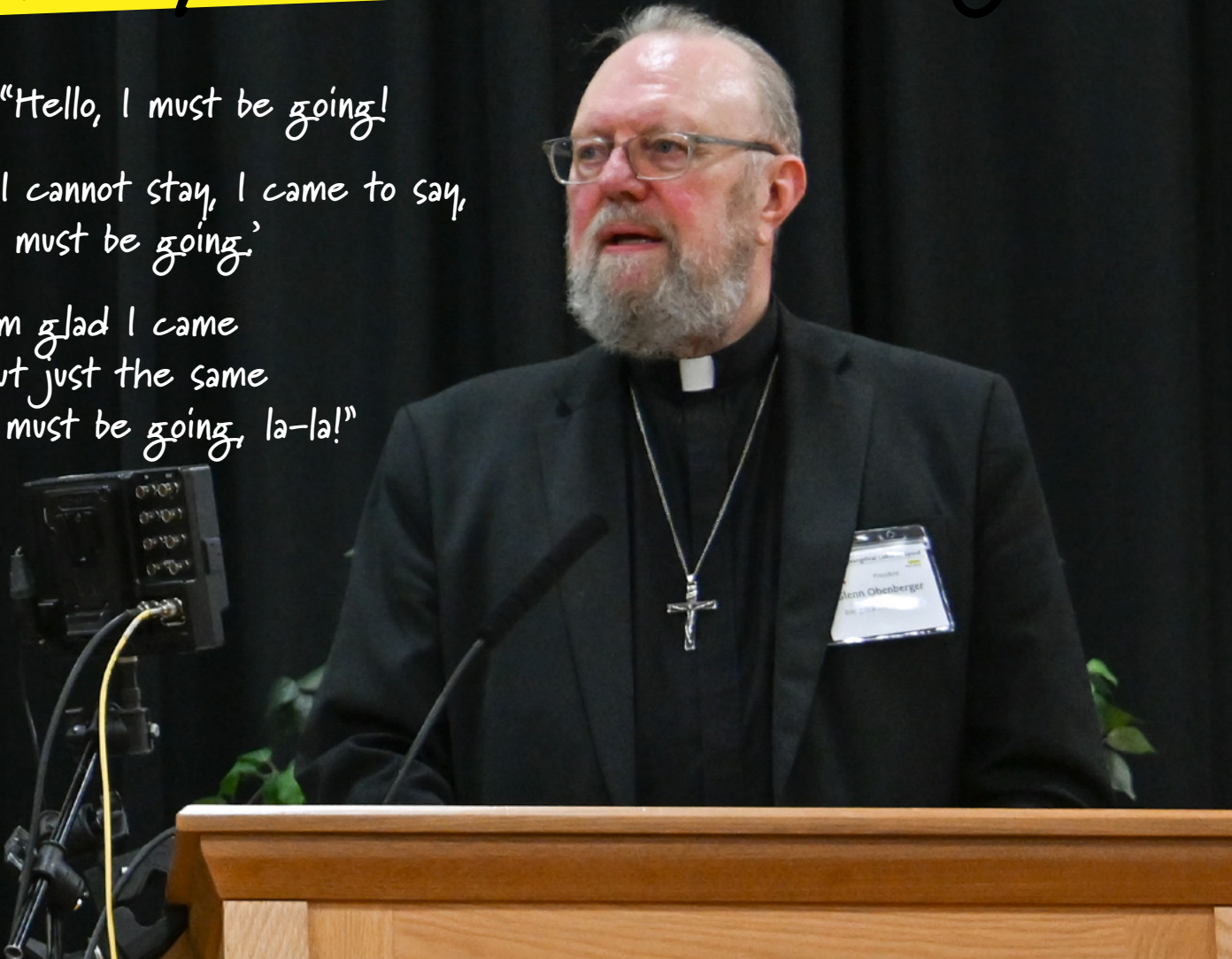
SG: And lutefisk?

The sanctuary and organ loft of Zion Lutheran Church, Wausau, Wisc.



"Hello, I Must Be Going!"

"Hello, I must be going!
I cannot stay, I came to say,
'I must be going.'
I'm glad I came
but just the same
I must be going, la-la!"



by **PRESIDENT GLENN OBENBERGER**,
Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mankato, Minn.

This is the opening line of the number Groucho Marx sings as Captain Geoffrey T. Spaulding in *Animal Crackers*. I must admit I have been a Groucho fan for most of my adult life, having been introduced to him by Lisa. We have a wooden wall-mounted coat rack in our home in Tacoma with this expression engraved on it. The song also includes this line: "I'll stay a week or two. I'll stay the summer through. But I am telling you: I must be going." Groucho, as usual, plays a shady, less-than-honest character who arrives on the scene with some sort of get-rich-quick scheme up his sleeve and therefore does not plan to stay very long. He plans to escape before being held accountable. Hence the plot develops, providing opportunities for the zany antics of all the Marx Brothers.

In 2022, when I allowed my name to be considered to serve as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) president, it was widely known that if elected I would only plan on serving one four-year term. Because that was the case, Groucho's opening line often came to my mind: "Hello, I must be going!" In my last year of that term, some have heard me give a countdown to my first day of retirement. It was not because of dissatisfaction over my work, but anticipating reuniting with our family. I enjoyed serving the Lord's Church in this office. I sought to serve my brother ELS pastors and the congregations they were called to serve, and to supervise the work we have committed ourselves to accomplish together. So, "I'm glad I came but just the same I must be going!"

In what I perceived as a transitional role, moving from the Boomer generation to perhaps a younger set of leaders, my first order of business was to ask some uncomfortable questions for us to consider. Therefore, we established the ELS Flavor Committee to identify what makes the ELS and even its college, Bethany Lutheran College (BLC), unique and worthy to continue to exist in the world of American Confessional Lutheranism. I remember hearing over two decades ago that the ELS would no longer exist in twenty years. Here we are, yes, smaller in numbers, but still organized as a body of believers seeking to serve Jesus and His kingdom. While we should not ignore this unsettling trend, we need to be cautious that we do not erroneously conclude that we should change our commitment to serving our Lord faithfully according to our Lutheran Confessions, as we have been doing in the tradition of the ELS flavor.

Through different committees, commissions, and councils, not to mention our standing boards and committees, we have addressed various challenges facing our work together. It has been a pleasure to see the wide variety of clergy and laity of different backgrounds, generations, expertise, and emphases collaborate and work toward viable solutions. We have addressed such issues as congregations at and below critical mass, internal dissensions, reserve funds management, strategic planning, etc. Since we live in an imperfect world as believers who remain sinners, we will never create a perfect synod, and will always discover in this broken world areas where we need to improve.

For a brief period, it was thought that the ELS was in financial crises because it appeared we were "deficit spending." However, in truth, we are doing well financially by God's grace. What was considered "deficit spending" was using reserve funds, which donors

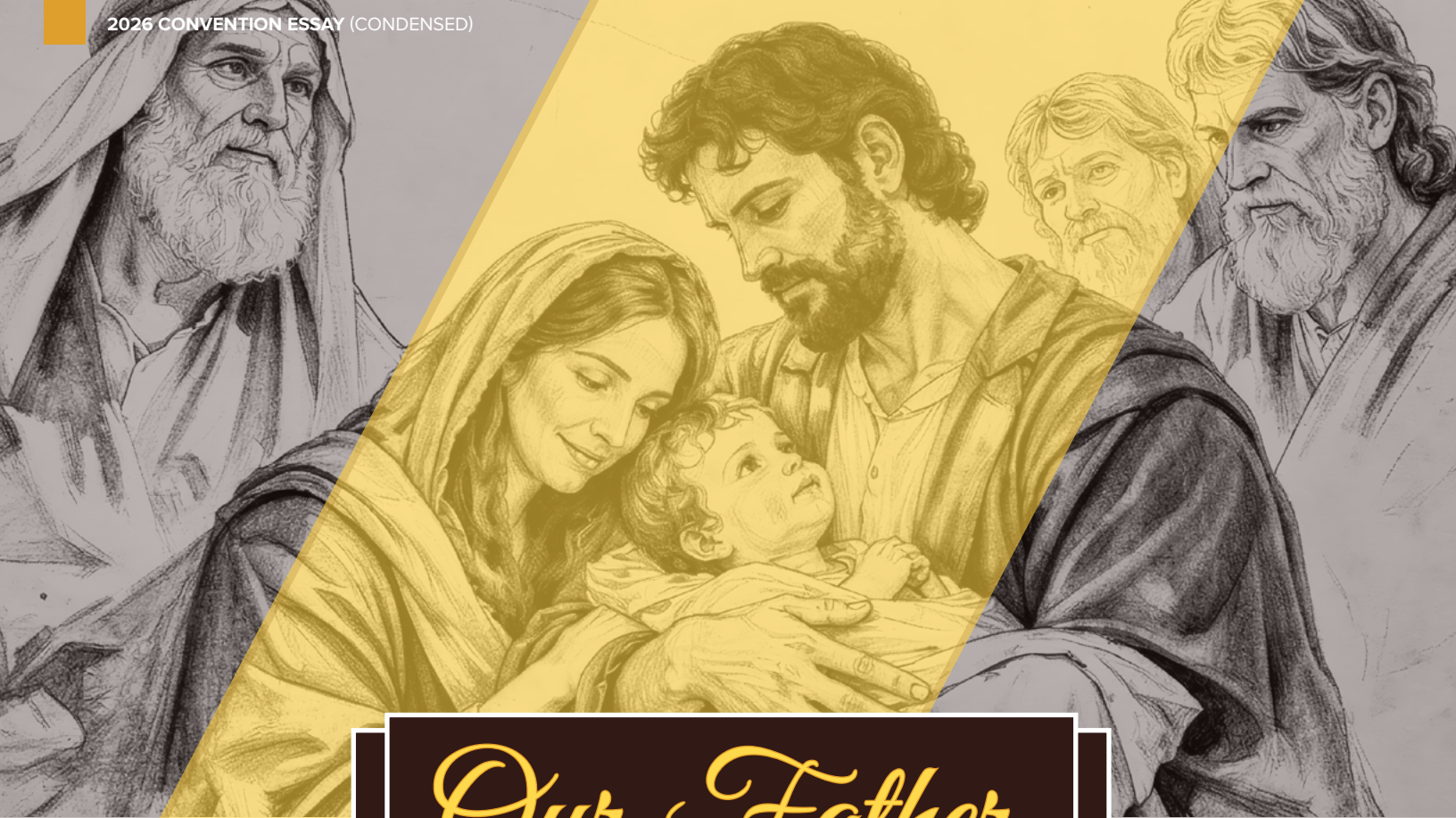
expected to be used responsibly by our various boards to accomplish the ministry they intended to fund "today."

There has been a concerted effort to instill the urgency of doing the work our Lord has given us to do "while it is day, before the night comes when no one can work" (John 9:4). Because we are relatively small in numbers among Confessional Lutheran church bodies in America, we might view ourselves as being given that one talent by the traveling lord (Matthew 25:14ff). We should not want to bury that treasure, but rather invest it in the name of the Lord of the Church to advance His kingdom. We do not serve a hard master, who "reaps where he has not sown, and gathers where he has not scattered seed." Pray that the Lord gives us the confidence to invest our one talent while it is day for His glory and the benefit of His kingdom. I expect our newly reorganized Planning and Coordinating Committee will lead us faithfully to invest that one talent to accomplish the things our Lord desires for us to do.

There is a blessed interdependence of the ELS and her college, BLC, which needs consistently to be nurtured. Each institution needs the other. Too many church body schools of higher learning in America have drifted apart, with the result that the spirit of secularization sets in. May our Lord preserve us from that result and keep us ever vigilant to hold on to what for these past one hundred years we have gratefully come to cherish.

While "I must be going"—back to our home in the Pacific Northwest, we will remain, the Lord willing, a part of the ELS. One does not have to live in or near Mankato to have a love for that unique flavor which joyously and unconditionally proclaims the message: "Lift Up Your Hearts—Your Sins Are Forgiven." We will miss the BLC concerts, plays, lectures, and the many members of the ELS with whom we connected in regular worship, work, and play for this past half decade. We anticipate, however, to reconnect with our many cherished members of the ELS 1,500 miles to the west.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve the Lord by serving you in this vocation. We will unceasingly pray for our ELS and specifically the new president, that he too may find the many joys associated with this work. And as always: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth" (Psalm 115:1).



Our Father,

BY WHOSE NAME ALL FATHERHOOD IS KNOWN

by **REV. ALEXANDER RING,**
Christ Lutheran Church and School, Port St. Lucie, Fla.

It was February 20, 2018. I was in my classroom when my phone rang. My sister's voice was heavy. "Dad is dead. He was in an accident." His car had drifted off the road less than a quarter mile from home. My mother and niece, who was training to be a nurse, tried to revive him. Paramedics rushed him to the hospital, but after the family gathered, my mother made the decision to remove the ventilator. He was declared dead.

As a Lutheran pastor, I had handled many such calls with professional calm. This time, though, the weight slowly descended. I told the principal I would go home. That evening, when I called my daughter, my voice broke. I spent the day in bed, talking with siblings. The grief surprised me with its depth. My father was a Christian. I believed in the resurrection. Our relationship was close but not especially affectionate. Why did his death hit so hard?

Apparently, it took my father's death to impress upon me just how significant fathers are.



Rev. Ring with daughter, Emeline Gullixson, and newly baptized grandson William.

GOD AS FATHER

I had known this intellectually. “Father” is one of God’s favorite pictures for His relationship with us, though it appears sparingly in the Old Testament—roughly fifteen times. Early instances include Exodus 4:22 (“Israel is My son, My firstborn”) and Deuteronomy 32:6. It appears in promises to David about Solomon (2 Samuel 7:14) and in several Psalms and Proverbs.

The image intensifies in the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah, who spoke to a people feeling abandoned in exile. Isaiah calls the coming Messiah “Everlasting Father” and has the people pray, “You, O LORD, are our Father; our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name” (Isaiah 63:16). Jeremiah promises, “I am a Father to Israel” (Jeremiah 31:9).

In the New Testament, the picture explodes. Jesus calls God “Father” approximately 165 times. His first recorded words are about “My Father’s business” (Luke 2:49). The Lord’s Prayer teaches us to address God as “Our Father.” After the resurrection, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father” (John 20:17), opening bold access to God for believers.

St. Paul develops this theme powerfully, especially for Gentiles. In his Areopagus sermon, he proclaims the God who made all nations from one blood, gives life and breath, and in whom “we live and move and have our being... For we are also His offspring” (Acts 17:28-29). In Ephesians, he declares that those once “far off” have been brought near by Christ’s blood and are now “members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19), no longer strangers but children who cry “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15).

When God institutes something, He often means it to reflect Himself. Fatherhood is meant to reflect God’s protection, kindness, love, and mercy.

THE REFLECTION TARNISHED

After Creation, Genesis is largely a book about families, and its fathers are deeply flawed. This is not a weakness in Scripture but a strength. Good literature needs flawed characters so that we can see ourselves and learn. Men especially need this, as we tend toward perfectionism, particularly regarding our families. Seeing biblical fathers’ failures helps us recognize our own sin, be warned, and look to Christ for the solution.

GOD EXPECTS FATHERS TO LEAD

God placed Adam in the garden with purpose and dominion, giving him the command regarding the Tree

of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as an opportunity for grateful obedience. Adam failed by heeding his wife over God’s clear word. The Lord held him responsible as head of the family; through “one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Romans 5:19).

Paul writes that “the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23). This is not a master-slave relationship. “Head” implies source, life, and completion. Husbands are called to lead by giving, guiding, nurturing, and embodying virtue—disciplined courage directed toward responsibility to God and family.

Fathers lead especially in spiritual matters. Studies consistently show the father’s church attendance is one of the strongest predictors of a child’s lifelong faith. Simple actions matter: attending church together, praying for the family, reading Bible stories, and listening to memory work. Ancient practice seated men on the pulpit side of church as a reminder to listen to God first; today, families sit together to support one another in vocation.

GOD EXPECTS FATHERS TO TEACH DISCIPLINE

Biblical fathers often failed through leniency. Abraham with Ishmael, Isaac with Esau, Jacob with Joseph, Eli with his sons, David with Absalom, and Samuel with Joel and Abijah—all illustrate the pattern. The people’s demand for a king in 1 Samuel 8 was partly a response to Samuel’s corrupt sons.

Discipline is difficult. Parents hate to see their children unhappy, and daily life offers many reasons to let things slide. Yet Scripture warns repeatedly against this failure. Here are practical principles:

- **Be consistent.** Children find deep security in knowing what to expect. Discipline should be diligent and planned, not sporadic.
- **Discipline without emotion as much as possible.** Warn once, then act. Most childish sin is not a personal attack but evidence of the ongoing struggle with their sinful nature (Romans 7).
- **Focus on discipline, not punishment.** The goal is training and admonition in the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), not revenge. Start small, increase when needed, and delay major decisions when emotions are high.
- **Forgive fully.** When a child apologizes, respond with clear words of forgiveness. Let that be the final word. Consequences may remain, but the message must be that they do not earn parental love—or Christ’s—by perfect behavior. The Small Catechism’s teaching on Confession and Absolution is a model here.

GOD EXPECTS FATHERS TO LOVE

Ephesians 5 was revolutionary for its time. Ancient household codes reinforced the absolute power of the *paterfamilias*. Paul begins by addressing wives as intelligent moral agents who submit “as to the Lord.” Then he commands husbands: “Love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25). In the first-century world, this was startling. Marriage was about procreation and alliances, not love. Love for one’s wife could even be viewed as weakness.

Paul also tells fathers to be actively involved in raising children, especially spiritually, which was unusual in a culture where fathers were often distant. Modern fathers face similar temptations toward selfishness after long workdays, understandably so. The solution is intentionality: schedule time, choose shared activities, and stay involved in education.

UPHOLDING FATHERS

Western culture has increasingly questioned the importance of fathers since the 1960s. Academic works and media sometimes treat fathers as optional or even problematic. Within the church, we rightly honor mothers on Mother’s Day with special events, adulation, and prayers. On the other hand, Father’s Day often receives noticeably less attention.

Congregations can help recognize and nurture the importance of fatherhood by creating low-stakes opportunities for men to gather—shooting, golf, cigars—building toward deeper conversation. Activities that highlight fathers (Donuts with Dad, father-child events) send a clear message of value. Younger fathers should guard time with their families; providing materially is good and necessary, but presence shapes children. Experienced fathers should offer generous encouragement rather than unsolicited advice. A simple, “You’re doing a great job” carries weight.

ST. JOSEPH, GUARDIAN OF OUR LORD

If I could ask one biblical character to be developed more, it would be St. Joseph. He appears briefly yet models ideal fatherhood. He listens to God even at personal cost—taking Mary as his wife despite appearances, fleeing to Egypt, and returning to Nazareth. He is protective, just, and selfless, content to serve without seeking the spotlight. The Christmas story often marginalizes him, yet his quiet obedience protected the Holy Family.

CONCLUSION

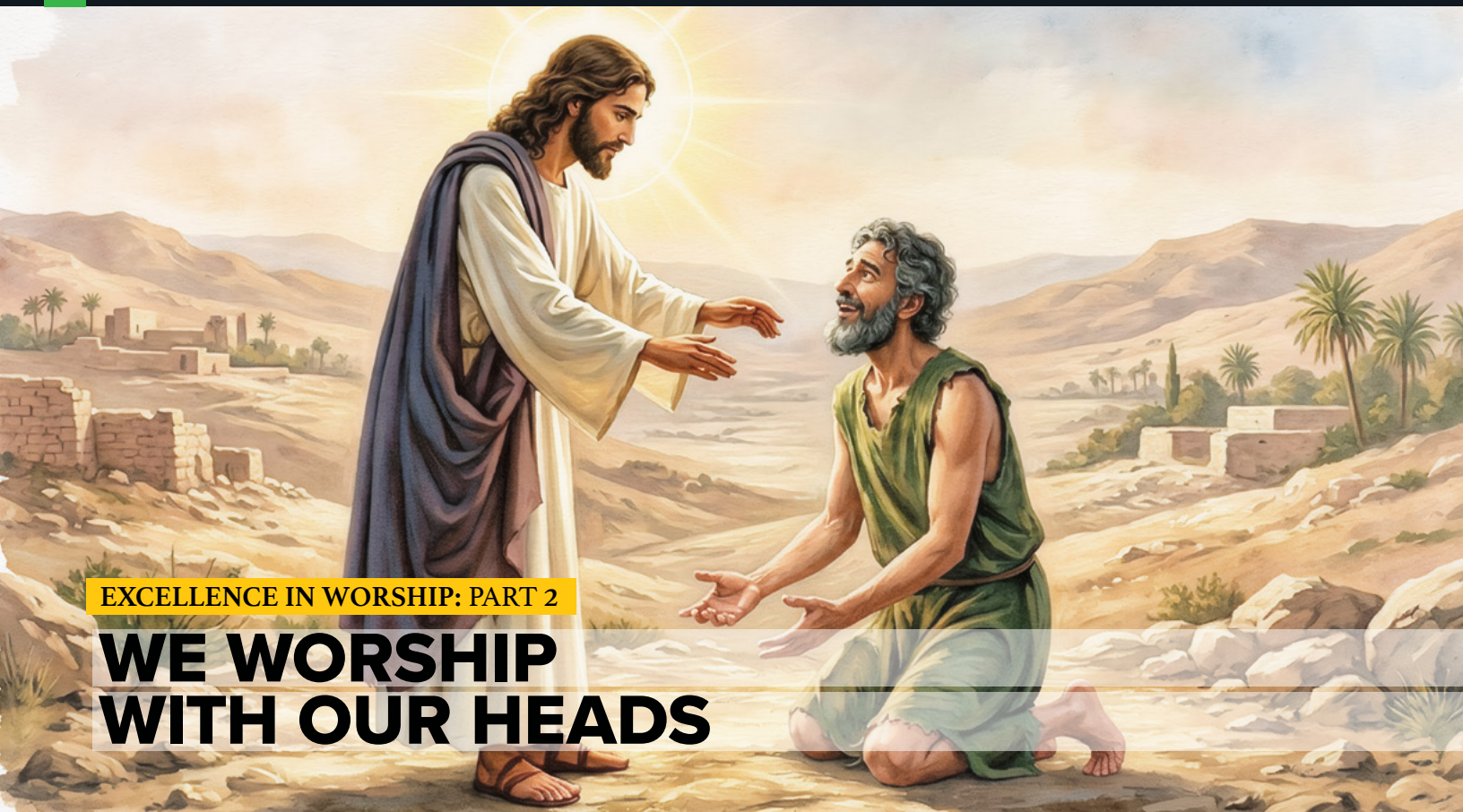
In the Large Catechism, Luther expounds on the Fourth Commandment, noting its profound weight. God commands not merely love but honor for parents, placing them next to Himself. We are to regard them as God’s representatives regardless of their failings.

Fathers especially need to hear this. We know our own lowliness, poverty, and frailty better than anyone. We remember our failures more vividly than our successes. Yet God Himself gave us our children and placed us in our family. He does not make mistakes. The same Everlasting Father who sent His Son to the cross forgives all our failings in Baptism and the Gospel. We are no longer slaves but sons, crying “Abba, Father,” and heirs through Christ (Galatians 4:6-7).

May the Lord Jesus, who was obedient to His earthly parents, bless our homes. May He grant fathers selfless leadership, parents wisdom, and children love and obedience, until we all reach our heavenly home. Amen.

▼ ELS pastor fathers and their ELS pastor sons.





EXCELLENCE IN WORSHIP: PART 2

WE WORSHIP WITH OUR HEADS

Excellent worship starts with the head—not the human head, but Christ the Head. Colossians 1:18 refers to Him as “the head of the body, the church.” As the Head, Jesus sacrificed Himself for the Body by His death on the cross. As the Head, He rose from the dead in triumph and ascended into heaven to prepare a place for the members of His Body. As the Head, He continues to strengthen and nourish the Body through the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments.

The Body is nothing without the Head; the Church is nothing without Jesus. All life flows from Him. All worship of God goes through Him. This is why Christians pray to God the Father “in Jesus’ name” and “through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.” We are able to worship the living God because God the Father sent His Son to redeem us from our sin and death.

We show honor and thankfulness to Christ the Head by how we use our heads. It was on our heads that the water of Baptism was applied when we were cleansed and joined to Jesus. As the children of God, we want to honor Him with all our mind (Matthew 22:37). We gladly hear and learn His holy Word. We meditate on it and memorize it. We order our thoughts and plans according to His will.

When our thoughts turn to selfishness, anger, and pride, we bow our heads in humble repentance and confess our sins. Then we listen eagerly for the sweet

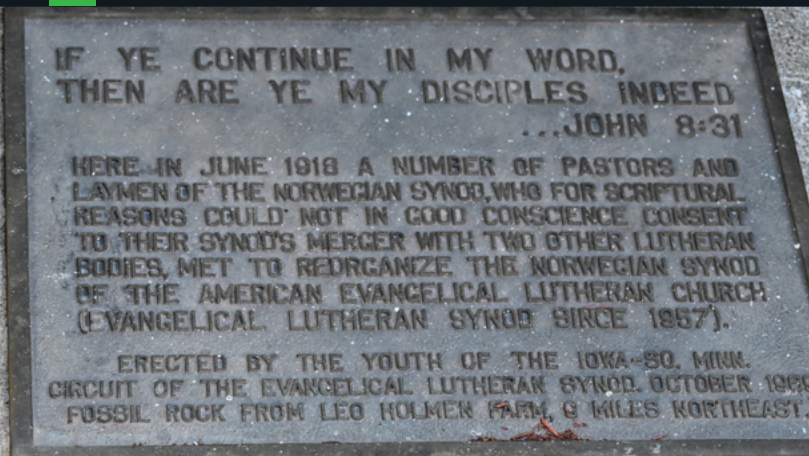
words of Jesus’ absolution, sometimes applied with the touch of the pastor’s hand on our head: “By the authority of God and of my holy office, I declare to you the gracious forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The gracious forgiveness of all your sins! For this wonderful gift, we “fall on our face” in humble thanksgiving like the father of promise, Abram (Genesis 17:3); like the leader of God’s people, Joshua (Joshua 5:14); and like the Samaritan healed of his leprosy (Luke 17:16). We joyfully acknowledge that every good gift comes from God, both in this life and for the life to come.

We worship with our heads by focusing on Jesus our Savior, who gave Himself for us and continues to give us His forgiveness, grace, and life. We turn our faces in loving service to God and neighbor, and we bow our heads in humble gratitude for His blessings. When Jesus our Head returns in glory on the last day, He promises that on the heads of all His people He will place “an imperishable crown” (1 Corinthians 9:25), “the crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8), “the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

*And when, dear Lord, before Thy throne in heaven
To me the crown of joy at last is given,
Where sweetest hymns Thy saints forever raise Thee,
I, too, shall praise Thee.*

(Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary #292, v. 15)





REFORMATION LECTURES: 2026

2026

BJARNE WOLLAN TEIGEN

Reformation Lectures

October 29–30, 2026 | The Sports and Fitness Center at Bethany Lutheran College
Mankato, Minnesota

Did Luther Have an Agenda?

Luther's Liturgical Writings

LUTHER'S OCCASIONAL SERVICES

Prof. Aaron Christie, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisc.

LUTHER'S DIVINE SERVICES

Dr. Joseph Herl, Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Neb.

LUTHER'S HYMNS

Prof. Dennis Marzolf, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn.