



IT IS WRITTEN: "Behold, I make all things new." Revelation 21:5

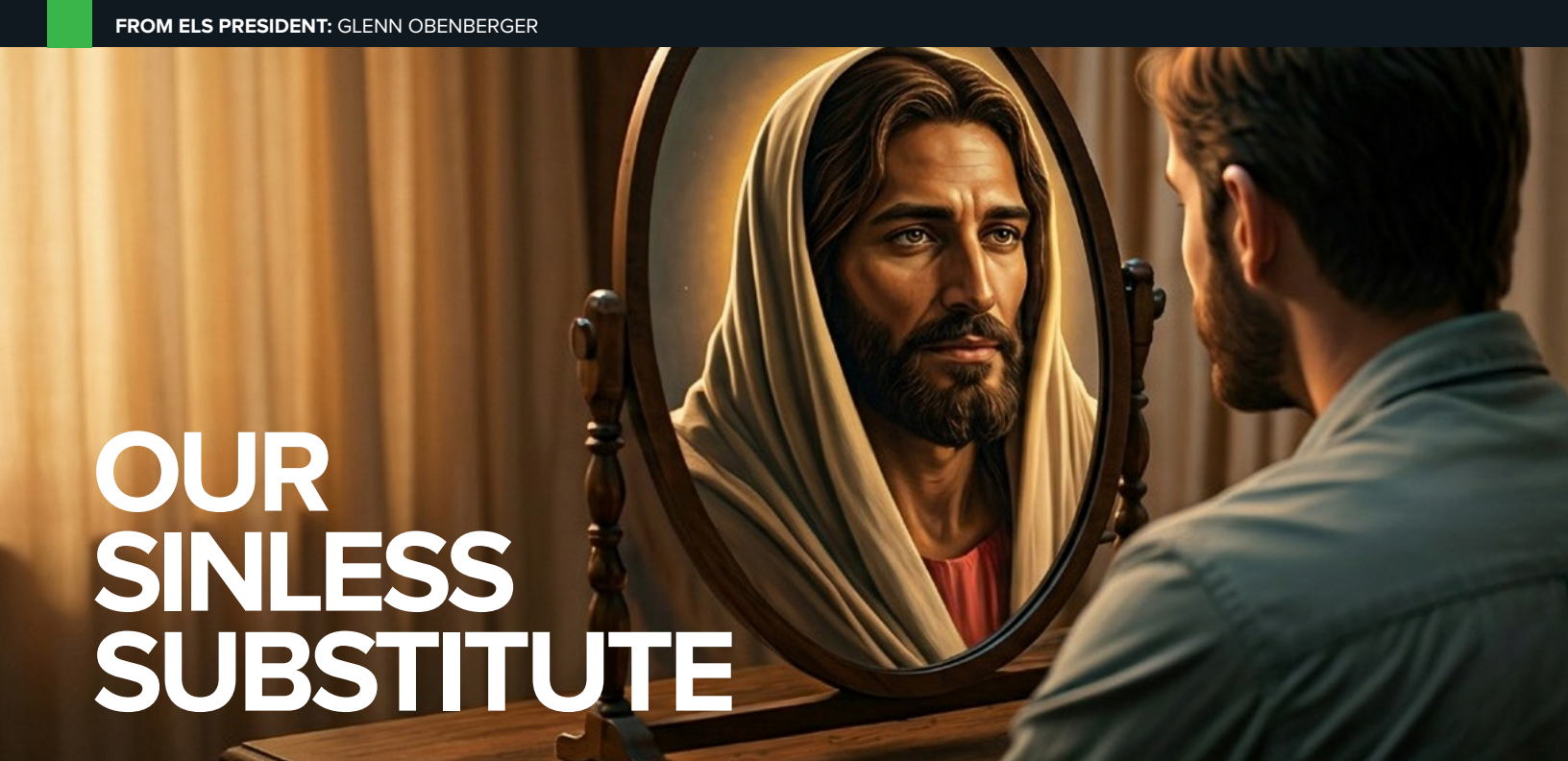
LUTHERAN SENTINEL

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OUR SINLESS SUBSTITUTE

Perhaps one of the more puzzling teachings from Scripture for us is that Jesus was tempted in every way that we are and yet was without sin. When we consider our various temptations, we recognize that it is almost instantaneous when the temptation comes that we fall headlong into its spell or obsession. So, for example, when we see someone or a certain item which we find appealing, our lusting or coveting appears almost simultaneously. How could Jesus have had similar temptations without that component of sin? He not only remained without sin after being tempted, but He did not have original sin and its accompanying concupiscence.

Concupiscence is that part of our condition as sinners which seeks and loves carnal things. It is our sinful desire to please ourselves instead of our Creator God. It is difficult for us to understand how Jesus could have been tempted without that component of sin, because the reality for sinful mankind ever since the fall into sin cannot separate the experience of temptation from concupiscence. Jesus did not have original sin and thus no concupiscence. Nevertheless, Jesus was tempted in all points as we are, yet He remained sinless for us, so that we might have His eternal righteousness through faith.

Similarly, we have a hard time grasping what life will be like at the end of all things we now know and experience, when we will enjoy everlastingly the new heavens and new earth. Our inability to comprehend this coming glory in a real world (Isaiah 66:22-23, Revelation 21:1-3) is that we cannot imagine a state of sinless human living. How will we be able to enjoy a full

life apart from the full power and influence of sin and its carnal desires? This expression in part captures the remarkable difference: “The liberated and renewed creation (Romans 8:21) will be no more an instrument of idolatry but henceforth only the occasion of doxology.”¹ Fearing and loving God above all things will characterize the inhabitants of heaven forever. Our every thought, word, and deed will bring praise to our Creator God without end.

We tend to agree with Luther that while the world as we know it will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:12-13), it will not be annihilated. So, when God makes all things new (Revelation 21:5), He will not make the new skies and new earth out of nothing, but rather of the matter that remains; just as when by the work of the Spirit we are born again, made a new creation in Christ, we retain our bodies and souls, but they are now sanctified. On that great last day God will glorify His creation, giving the resurrected bodies of His believers a real world to live in; the old will be gone. There will be no more death, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain (Revelation 21:4).

Just because you cannot now in your sinful state imagine such a place of eternal joy, do not doubt it is promised to you through Christ Jesus your Savior. Conclude with Paul: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Real eternal joy awaits you. You will experience life to its fullest beyond your wildest imagination in that promised new heavens and earth, for Jesus’ sake.

1. *Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics*, Vol. XIII: Eschatology, by John R. Stepheson, ed. Robert Preus. The Luther Academy: Fort Wayne, IN, 1993, p. 129.

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Cover photo: a luna moth (*Actias luna*).

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— a Faithful — LUTHERAN SENTINEL

“If we rightly examine ourselves, we will find in us nothing but sin and death, from which we cannot set ourselves free.” These words are marked “optional” in our church’s order of service for Holy Communion, and I opt to use them for special Communion services like Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday. But they’re not “optional” in the sense of “take ‘em or leave ‘em.” To examine ourselves prior to receiving our Lord’s Supper is our Lord’s will, expressed by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29: “A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.”

If we rightly examine ourselves as heirs of the Reformation, as conservative—or, more accurately, confessional—Lutherans, what will we find? The sins are obvious: complacency and self-satisfaction; taking God’s free grace and what it cost His Son for granted; showing no concern for the good works we’ve been appointed to do; obsessing over the big, bad world out there and what’s true and false about other churches, while losing sight of what’s true and false within us.

The *Lutheran Sentinel* is the publication of record for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. It serves the synod by watching out for the people who make the synod what it is, who give the synod its flavor. To fulfill this sacred purpose, and to help one another mark and avoid the sins that so easily ensnare us, the *Lutheran Sentinel*

will look first to the Word of God and to His Son Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen Savior, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

And while the *Lutheran Sentinel* looks out for our congregations as a faithful sentinel should, it will “rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). It will celebrate the faith that unites us and appreciate what makes each of our churches unique. It will draw wisdom from the different experiences and perspectives of our members (not just of our pastors). Finally, this publication of synodical record will also look out for the unchurched in our communities.

God’s Word. Our Savior. Our family. Our neighbors. The *Lutheran Sentinel* will keep its eyes on them, that we may look to them more and love them more. Let this be an assurance to current readers and a notice to future contributors.

“If we rightly examine ourselves, we will find in us nothing but sin and death, from which we cannot set ourselves free. Therefore, our Lord Jesus Christ has had mercy upon us. He has taken upon Himself our nature, so that He might fulfill for us the whole will and law of God; and for us and for our deliverance suffer death and all that we by our sins have deserved.”

Question ...

What is the ELS position on people not of our fellowship actively participating in an ELS church's worship service; for example, serving as an organist or pianist, singing in the choir, or playing in some other musical ensemble?

Answer:

The ELS has no official position in this particular matter, other than to follow the clear Word of God. One can think of several circumstances where it would not be wrong for an ELS congregation to engage someone outside of our fellowship to serve in a musical capacity. Still, depending on various factors, it may not always be the wisest course of action.

As to who is leading the worship service, Scripture speaks clearly. Musicians do not lead the worship service; the pastor leads the service. In Acts chapter 20, St. Paul encourages pastors to “keep watch over yourselves and the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood” (v. 28). The pastor oversees and shepherds the flock, including leading the flock in worship. Even when a layman occasionally “leads” part of the service or reads one of the Scripture lessons, the pastor is ultimately responsible for the content of the worship service, including the music.

In addition, Scripture distinguishes between spiritual activities that always express our joint fellowship in Christ, and those spiritual activities that may, but do not always, express that same unity. Gathering to hear God's Word (Hebrews 10:25), receiving the Lord's Supper together (1 Corinthians 10:17), and praying together (1 Thessalonians 5:17), as pure acts of worship, are always joint expressions of our fellowship with Christ and with one another as believers in Christ. Singing or playing an instrument,

however, may not always be a joint expression of fellowship, depending on the individuals involved. The congregation who hires an organist outside of our fellowship does not view the organist's playing as an expression of his unity with them, but only a service he provides them. In a similar way, the wedding soloist does not view her singing as an expression of joint fellowship, but as a kindness she is doing for the bride and groom. The performance does not necessarily constitute an act of church fellowship.

Sometimes, however, bringing in a musician from outside our fellowship may be unwise. Hiring the spouse of the local ELCA pastor to regularly play the organ for worship, for example, might lead to false impressions about the serious doctrinal differences between our church bodies. In love for the faithful and the erring, churches strive to avoid giving offense in this area. For this reason, ELS congregations generally prefer to utilize musicians from within our fellowship, while allowing for exceptions under certain circumstances.



Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?

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by **REV. MICHAEL K. SMITH**, ELS Vice President,
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A big ol' pile of dirt.

When I visited Turkey twenty years ago, that's what Colossae looked like. It was hard to imagine that the nondescript mound we climbed had once been an important hub of trade stretching back to the sixth century B.C., famous for such things as wool and textiles. When St. Paul wrote a letter to the Christians there around A.D. 60-62, the city was likely still thriving.

But what Paul stressed in his letter really has nothing to do with worldly prosperity. After commending them for their faith in and love for their Savior, and how their daily lives are reflections of such faith and love (Colossians 1:3-8), Paul prays that the Colossians would continue to grow in the same (1:9-12). Then he proceeds by reminding them precisely what God the Father did for them: "The Father rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (1:13-14, EHV).

Rescue. That implies we're in need of saving. That we're in dire straits. That we're in serious danger and can't do anything on our own to make our situation better.

And doesn't that describe who and what we are by nature? The way we're conceived and born? We've heard so many times we're sinful that maybe the seri-

ousness of that word has become...less serious. Only a minor impediment to living a better life. Something we can deal with most days, if we really put our mind to it.

If that's the direction our thoughts are headed, Paul puts us on the right track by specifying from what our Father in heaven rescued us: "the domain of darkness." This is not just a "scary" place, like a creepy, old, abandoned house we were dared to go into at night as a teenager. When the Bible talks about darkness, we have to remember who the prince of darkness is: Satan himself (John 12:31; 14:30). The realm of Satan is complete spiritual darkness because it is totally devoid of anything truly good, especially the goodness of God. In his realm, Satan constantly fights against Jesus, the "Light of the world" (John 8:12). If we're in the domain of darkness, we are lost. Completely lost. Bound for an eternity in the darkness of hell.

But our Father did not want us to stay in that dreadful darkness. So He "transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" (Colossians 1:13). God picked us up and moved us from one kingdom to another, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, the kingdom of the Light of the world. Even though it would mean a sacrifice beyond what we can imagine, God was willing to give up His own Son, His Son whom He loved with a love beyond what we can imagine, so that He could make this transfer possible.

God made this life-giving transfer for us by simple-looking means: water poured over our head, water connected to His Word so that it isn't just plain water but a life-giving bath of rebirth and renewal (Titus 3:5). The sin in which we were conceived and born? Gone. The sins which we continue to commit even now because our sinful nature—unfortunately!—sticks around? Gone. All our sins, past, present, and future, have been thrown as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12). They've all been thrown into the deepest sea (Micah 7:19). Whichever picture you choose, our sins are gone.

And this is all because of the redemption we have in our Savior (Colossians 1:14). Sometimes I've explained redemption by referring to the extra price you have to pay when you buy a bottle of pop (or soda, depending on where you live); you know, the five or ten cents tacked on at the register that you get back...when you return the empty? But the problem with that illustration is that we really don't think that much about the nickel or dime—it's just a nickel or dime. It might not be enough incentive to get me to recycle my empty.

The redemption Paul refers to here involved the price of a life. Sin demands the payment of blood, the payment of a human life. In God's courtroom of perfect justice, we're supposed to make that payment for our sin. After all, as it was soon after the very beginning,

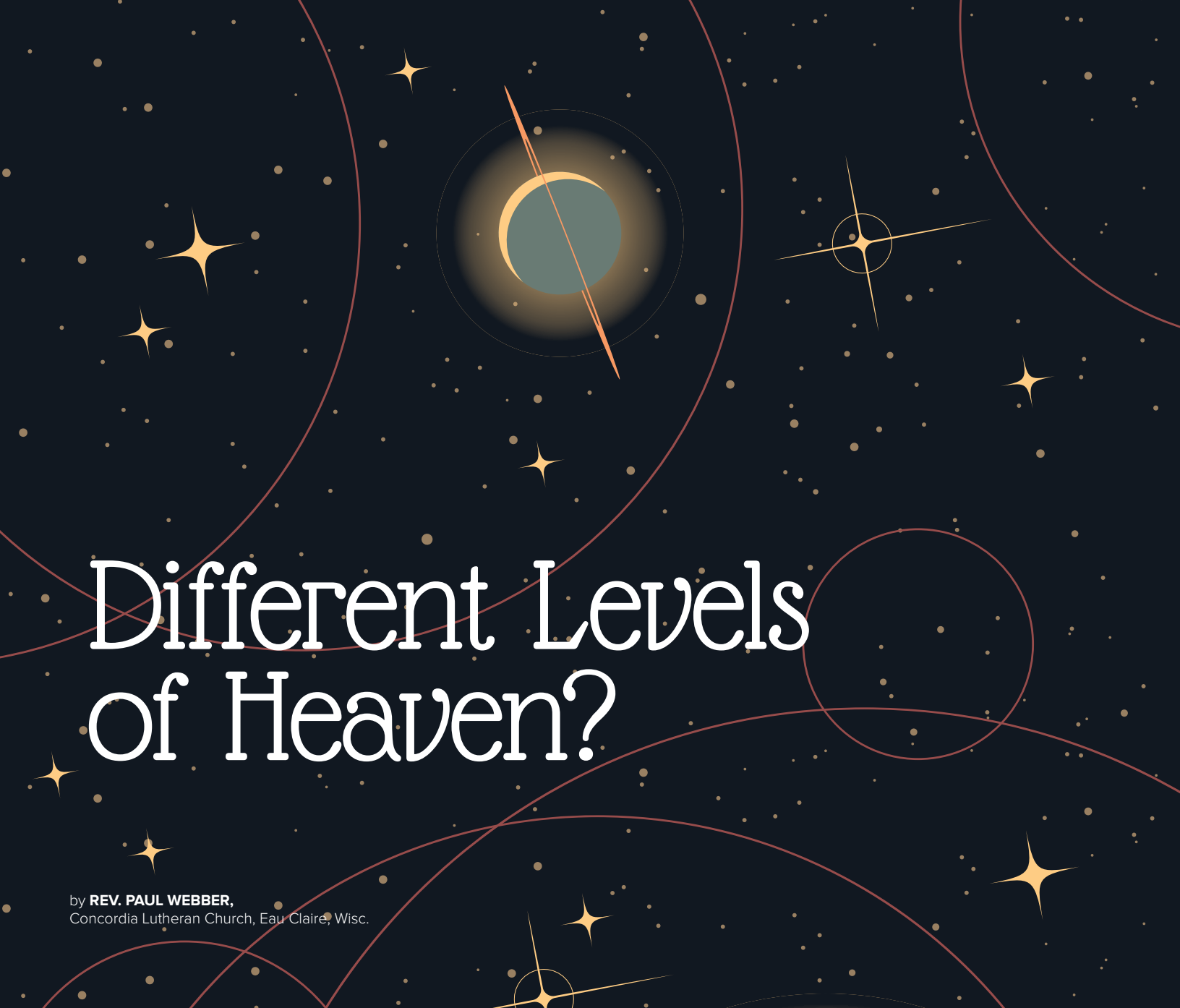
sin brought death to our first parents. But “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) doesn't just mean physical death. It means spiritual death. Eternal separation from God our Father. And that's why our Father stepped in and sent His Son He loves. That's why the Son—who is also Man—stepped into our place and suffered and died instead of us. He paid the price—the ransom—necessary so we get the ultimate reprieve. We get to be in the kingdom of light instead of the kingdom of darkness. We have life instead of death.

Just last year, a team from a Turkish university started excavating the big ol' pile of dirt at Colossae. The first major part of the excavation is a cluster of “bath-tub” tombs from around 2200 years ago. These tombs were cut into the rock that now lies just below the dirt. When I look at the picture of these tombs, open and staring empty toward the sky, it makes me think of the ultimate transfer that our loving God will bring about on the Last Day. Yes, as redeemed rescuees from the kingdom of darkness, when our rescuing Redeemer returns, our graves will open and our bodies will be reunited with our souls, forever to live in the eternal kingdom of light.

Until that day, fellow rescuee, live as a child of light (1 Thessalonians 5:5). That's the only way to live.

▼ Remains of the ancient city of Colossae near Denizli, Turkey





Different Levels of Heaven?

by **REV. PAUL WEBBER,**
Concordia Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wisc.

I'm guessing that we've all seen pairs of well-dressed young adults with name tags walking around our towns, knocking on doors. Or maybe you saw them riding bicycles and they stood out even more, because they're always wearing helmets. Perhaps these young adults have even knocked on your door and wanted to talk to you about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These young people are missionaries from what is more commonly known as the Mormon Church.

There are lots of things that could be said about the Mormon religion. But one thing that needs to be said is that we don't consider Mormons to be Christians in the same sense that we consider Roman Catholics or Baptists to be Christians. Mormons don't believe in the

Trinity. They also believe that Jesus and the devil are brothers. But those are not the things that the Mormon missionaries are going to lead with when they knock on your door.

What they will almost certainly lead with is how the Mormon Church is the true, restored, church on earth. The Mormon Church has a prophet, the president, just like God's people in Old Testament times often had. And only the Mormon Church has the true authority from God to perform baptisms and the temple rituals that can help you gain your way into the highest levels of heaven.

Highest levels though? That certainly isn't how Lutherans, or any Christians for that matter, are taught to think about heaven. For us, heaven is a single spiritual,

destination where the souls of Christians who die go to live together with Jesus, without any sin or sickness or hunger or thirst or anything else that is bad.

Mormons also believe that heaven is good; far better than even the best version of life on earth. But the Mormon Church teaches that there are at least three different levels to heaven. Which one you go to depends on what you believe, and even more importantly, what you do during this life.

But there's a curveball to this in Mormonism. When every person dies, their body is buried and their soul goes to what is called the "spirit world." In the spirit world there is "spirit heaven," where Mormons go. But there's also "spirit prison," where the souls of non-Mormons go.

To our Lutheran ears, spirit prison probably sounds like purgatory, but according to Mormonism, spirit prison is not a place of suffering. It's actually a place where the souls of those who die not believing in Mormonism are given a second chance to believe in it, so that when Jesus returns, they can be part of one of the levels of heaven instead of being cast into the outer darkness.

The outer darkness is the Mormon term for hell. And just like we wouldn't want to talk about hell in our first conversation with an unbeliever, I doubt that the young missionaries would want to talk about it either.

Mormonism teaches that the outer darkness is a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of complete and permanent separation from God. There are two kinds of people who will be cast into the outer darkness; the worst of the worst from history—people like Hitler and Mao and Stalin—but also those who apostatized from Mormonism. I observed in my time as a pastor in Utah that this extra threat from Mormonism often had the effect of giving pause to people who were seriously considering leaving that religion: "What if Mormonism is the one true church? If it is, then by becoming a Lutheran, I'm going to end up in hell!"

But besides the utterly depraved and the apostates who are going to end up cast into the outer darkness, Mormonism teaches that everyone else will spend eternity in one of three levels of heaven.

The lowest of these levels is the Telestial Kingdom. The people who end up as part of this kingdom will be those who led sinful lives on earth; murderers, liars, thieves, etc. Still, Mormonism teaches that even this lowest level of heaven will be far nicer than anything we know during this life.

The second level of heaven is called the Terrestrial Kingdom. This will be the final destination for two groups of people: those who lived generally decent, moral, lives, but still didn't believe the Mormon gospel;

and also people who believed as Mormons but didn't participate in the temple rituals. Those who spend eternity in this kingdom will be able to be in the presence of Jesus, but not God the Father.

The highest level of heaven in Mormonism is called the Celestial Kingdom. This is where faithful Mormons who were able to participate in temple rituals will be able to live fully in the presence of God forever. But even within this highest level of heaven, there are still degrees of glory.

The absolute highest level of glory according to Mormonism is reserved only for those Mormons who were sealed "for time and eternity" to their husband or wife in a Mormon temple. In this highest exalted state, Mormon husbands and wives can actually become gods themselves, giving birth to their own "spirit children," and ruling over them on a planet just like God rules over the earth. This has always been taught by Mormon leaders, who say that all people are potential "gods in embryo."

Earlier I mentioned that the young Mormon missionaries will probably try to say that Mormonism is the true, restored, Christian Church on earth. This claim is provably false. The faith of the Christian Church can be traced from the present all the way back through the Reformation and other eras to the apostles and to Jesus Himself. There have certainly been times in history when false doctrine was mixed in with true doctrine, to the detriment of God's church and His people. But Jesus promised His disciples before He ascended, "I am with you always, even till the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

We can see from the Bible and from history how Jesus has kept that promise. Sometimes the church has needed to be reformed. Sometimes the church has needed that reform very badly. But the Christian Church has never disappeared from the earth and needed to be restored.

The Mormon goal of being able to be the god of your own planet someday should remind us of the first temptation of the devil to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden: "If you eat this fruit you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5). No Christian should aspire to being God's equal. It is enough for us to have the promise of the Garden of Eden restored; that in the new heaven and the new earth we will all live together with God as His created and redeemed people for all eternity. And the reason why we have that promise of one, heavenly, kingdom together is not because of the quality, or lack thereof, of our lives. It is because of the perfect righteousness of Jesus, which has been given to us in His means of grace and counted as our own through faith.



A Psalm of Gratitude

▲ **Druid Arch**, Canyonlands National Park, Utah

Utah is my home. It seems as though my soul was baptized in desert red dirt and the Great Salt Lake's brine, and so even when I lived just about everywhere else, I kept returning here—annually on visits, and weekly through books and imagination. Over the last few decades, as an avid hiker, I've become an adept judge of how to hike on slickrock sandstone, how to squint at rock art to discern its age, and how to give a moose a wide berth on a Wasatch Mountain trail. Some of my closest and oldest friends live here. Utah is my home. Salt Lake Valley is my valley.

In the fall of 2023, God made that a legal reality when He called me to serve Hope, our synod's lone congregation in Utah. When I drove past Hope for the first time as its pastor, the sign read, "Welcome home, Pastor Adam Brasich." People repeatedly asked me how I liked Utah and how I was acclimating. With a chuckle, the answer was always the same: "Very well!" One of my best friends and his family filled a pew at my in-

stallation service. My congregation embraced me with love. I gained trusted colleagues at our neighboring WELS churches. Entering my new call, I was extremely grateful.

I moved to Utah in mid-October, just as winter enveloped our mountains. Before the snow started, I hiked a trail in one of our canyons. Mesmerized by white aspens and jagged granite, I eagerly anticipated spring.

After the snow melted, I escaped to the mountains with abandon. On Memorial Day 2024, I decided to hike Mount Olympus, which towers over Salt Lake Valley. Utah's tourism website sells the hike well: "If Salt Lake City hikers were all in a college fraternity, Mount Olympus would be considered a hazing ritual." A 3.3-mile trail leads from the parking lot to the peak, gaining 4,800 feet in elevation.

Starting around 7:00 AM, it took me about three hours to reach the summit. Even in late May, it was snow packed. A panorama of my valley and surround-



▲ Dog Lake, Salt Lake County, Utah

ing mountain ranges greeted me. Relishing the accomplishment, I ate my lunch and rested, feasting on the view.

I began my descent. I made it down the mild rock scramble to the saddle and then began to work down towards the parking lot. Taking a step, I heard a “pop,” and my left knee seized. Knowing I needed to reach my car, I focused on making it down the mountain, using my trekking poles for support. Five hours later, drained of any excitement, I hobbled into my car in a state of denial.

When my limp didn’t heal itself over the course of the next week, I visited the hospital and began a process that led to a diagnosis of a shredded ACL. If I wanted to hike again, surgery was required. There was no question. I scheduled it for August 8, 2024.

In Ephesians 2:10, speaking of Christians, Paul writes that “we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” For the next year, I was the grateful recipient of the good works God prepared for my friends, family, and congregation. Jesus loved me through them.

Before my surgery, my best friend gave me inspired one-word advice that would guide my approach to everything that followed: “Patience.” He arranged his work schedule so that he could take me to the hospital for my surgery and situate me when I returned home. The members of Hope organized a meal chain for two weeks following my surgery, so day after day, my brothers and sisters visited with food and love. Our congregational president, a medical professional, helped change my surgical bandages and stayed as I showered to make sure I didn’t slip. A couple from church drove me to physical therapy until I could drive again. Since I was homebound, one of my WELS colleagues brought me the Lord’s Supper. Through myriad acts of service and love, Christ’s Body embraced and cared for me. His grace flowed through many hands. Grace begat gratitude.

It took two months before I abandoned my crutches. It took three months to conquer insomnia created by night pains. After four months, my limp disappeared. At my six-month follow-up, my surgeon encouraged me to start hiking again. Too many patients, he told me, recover from knee surgeries physically but not mentally. While patients’ bodies heal, their minds are haunted. Worried of a repeat injury, fear shackles the imagination.

Sheepishly, I admit that was true of me. I took my doctor’s advice, and, as spring arrived, I hit the trails. However, more than once I retreated to my car only a mile or two into my hike. Even though my knee felt fine, in my mind I could hear the “pop” of my ACL injury. I was afraid.

Gradually, though, gratitude replaced fear. I kept returning to my trails and going a little further. Hiking became a time of prayer—prayers for safety intermixed with prayers of thanksgiving. As I pushed myself and completed more difficult hikes, my gratitude grew. I was able to explore my home again! Natural Bridges, Druid Arch, Frary Peak, Kolob Canyons, and so many other places have been transformed into natural cathedrals as I’m overwhelmed not only by the glory of God reflected in their beauty but by the wonderful grace given to me that I can hike into Utah’s wildernesses to see them. Every hike has been transformed into a psalm of gratitude.

Frailty illuminates God’s grace. It’s only when we recognize the depths of our sin that we can stand in awe of Christ’s matchless love for us. Crosses—Christ’s, mine, and yours—force us to look to God, seeking His mercy. Receiving it, overwhelmed with gratitude, may we “have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:18-19). I’ve glimpsed it, and pray you do, too.

EXCELLENCE IN WORSHIP: PART I

WE WORSHIP WITH OUR BODIES

Photo: David Norris

When you hear the word “worship,” what is the first thing that comes to mind? Perhaps you imagine praying and singing praises to God, or you picture a congregation gathered at a church on Sunday morning. It is common to think of worship primarily as a matter of the mouth, but it is really a matter of the whole body.

Think about our postures as we take part in the worship service. We sit and stand. We fold our hands and bow our heads. We keep our eyes on the pastor and listen to what he says. We use our tongues and lips to speak and sing. We use our feet to walk to the front of the church and kneel or stand at the Communion rail. We open our mouths to receive the Lord’s body and blood.

These postures are not done randomly. They are done in response to God’s presence and work through His Word and Sacraments. The reason we attend a worship service is first of all to receive the gifts our Lord has promised to give. We receive forgiveness, peace, and strength because Jesus died to atone for the sins of all people and rose in victory over death. Praying and singing, folding our hands, bowing our heads, and attentively watching and listening are all done in response to these gifts.

We want to apply our whole body in His worship because Jesus redeemed our entire person—body and soul. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Romans 12:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

Martin Luther emphasized this whole-bodied worship: “It is to bow the head, bend the body, fall on the

knees, prostrate one’s self, and so forth, and to do such things as a sign and acknowledgement of an authority and power; just as people bow in silence before secular princes and lords...From this understanding of outward worship you will also understand what Christ meant by true spiritual worship. It is the adoration or bowing of the heart, so that from the bottom of your heart you thereby show and confess yourself to be his subordinate creature” (Luther’s Works, Vol. 36, pp. 292, 293).

We worship with our bodies by responding outwardly to what God has done in redeeming us and planting faith in our hearts. With our bodies, we want to honor, glorify, and praise Him in all that we do and at all times.

*We praise Thee, God, and Thee we bless;
We worship Thee in humbleness;
From day to day we glorify
Thee, everlasting God on high.
Of Thy great glory do we sing,
And e’er to Thee our thanks we bring.*

(Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary #36, v. 2)

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LUTHERAN YOUTH ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

LYA 2026



In the Beginning...

*July 23-26
Cincinnati, OH
at the Creation Museum & Ark Encounter*



- **Worship with hundreds of youth** at daily chapel and a Sunday Divine Service with the Lord's Supper
- **Hear keynotes** from Lutheran science professors from Bethany Lutheran College on the truth of creation: "I Don't Know Anything: Searching for Truth in God's Word and His World" by Professor Chad Heins; and "You Are a Special Creation" by Dr. Doyle Holbird
- **Explore both the Creation Museum and Ark Encounter**, themed complexes filled with exciting and entertaining experiences
- **Engage in competitive fun** against pastors and youth leaders in family-friendly archery dodgeball, ultimate frisbee & soccer

REGISTER AT [ELS.ORG/LYA](https://els.org/lya)

\$375 UNTIL JUNE 1

\$425 JUNE 2-JULY 1



ANNOUNCING THE

109th Convention
of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

70th Annual Meeting
of Bethany Lutheran College

11th Annual Meeting
of the Lutheran Schools of America, Inc.

*“Our Father, by Whose Name
All Fatherhood is Known”*

June 21-25, 2026

Bethany Lutheran College | Mankato, Minnesota

SYNOD SUNDAY, June 21

4:00 | Synod Sunday Service (Trinity Chapel)

Preacher: The Rev. Jeffery Merseeth (Princeton, Minn.)

Liturgist: The Rev. Samuel Gullixson (Parkland, Wash.)

5:00 | Dinner (free will donation)

MONDAY, June 22

9:00 | Opening Convention Service

1:00 | Anniversaries observed:

Erwin Ekhoﬀ	50 years
Theodore Gullixson	50 years
Harvey Abrahamson, Sr.	40 years
Robert Lawson, Sr.	40 years
Jonathan Madson	40 years
William Grimm	25 years
Timothy Hartwig	25 years
Lawrence Wentzlaff	25 years

TUESDAY, June 23

9:00 | Devotion

10:00 | Election of synod president and vice president

1:30 | Convention Essay

Essayist: The Rev. Alex Ring (Port St. Lucie, Fla.)

5:00 | Communion/Memorial Service

Preacher: The Rev. Paul Webber (Eau Claire, Wisc.)

Rev. Mark Rogers

Ruth Orvick (1928-2025) (wife of the late Rev. Pres. George Orvick)

Rev. Richard Fyffe

Rev. Brad Homan

Rev. Robert Carter

Yvonne Keeler (1934-2026) (wife of the Rev. Charles Keeler)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

10:30 | Convention Essay continued

THURSDAY, JUNE 25

8:45 | Unfinished Business

REV. KYLE J. MADSON, Secretary, Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The Eighth Annual Apologetics and Worldview Conference

24th - 25th of June, 2026, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN

Artificial Intelligence

Is AI a “giant leap for mankind”? A return to Babel? How can it be harnessed and used well? How does it impact Christian anthropology, the imago dei, a liberal arts education, human relationships and interaction? And what comes next?

Presentations

- I.** AI Explained: How does it work? What can it do and not do? What are its benefits and obvious dangers? (Rev. Jonathan Conner)
- II.** A Deeper Look (A): Anthropology, dehumanization, and AI's impact on a Christian liberal arts education (Rev. Dr. Adam Brasich)
- III.** A Deeper Look (B): Anthropology, companion bots, transhumanism, and what lies ahead (Dr. Brandon Steenbock)

Presentations are scheduled for June 24 (7pm) & June 25 (10:30am-3:30pm). Admission is free.

For more information contact Rev. David Thompson
507-344-7395 apologetics@blc.edu

To register for attending in person (no charge) and if you wish to have lunch in the Dining Center on Thursday, use the QR code below (note: the lunch is free but a free-will offering of \$10 would be appreciated). The conference will also be livestreamed at <https://apologeticscenter.org/events/>



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.