

THE VOICE^{OF} ZION

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Show me thy ways, O Lord;
Teach me thy paths.
Lead me in thy truth, and teach me:
For thou art the God of my salvation;
On thee do I wait all the day.

Psalm 25:4,5

Hope

Read about hope and hopelessness on pages 8–10.

PHOTO: DAN WUOLLET

In the Flock of the Good Shepherd

Jim Frantti

PROPHET ISAIAH depicted the kingdom of God as a sheepfold whose shepherd is the Lord who feeds His flock (Isa. 40:11). It is a familiar picture in the Bible. Jesus himself used the same illustration: “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14).

This image of the kingdom of God teaches us that the Lord is the shepherd of the flock. He knows His sheep and their needs and feeds them accordingly. He is the one who guides the flock along the good and everlasting way. For that reason the psalmist writes, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Ps. 23:1–3).

The Lord is always with His flock, even today. His Holy Spirit teaches and guides the flock. When God’s Spirit speaks to us, we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. Jesus said, “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (John 10:4).

In this flock we have an unerring guide who knows our needs. We can trust in our Good Shepherd. God has given us a secure dwelling place. “Fear not, little flock;” Jesus said, “for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

The Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, knows His sheep and what they need. He feeds His sheep heavenly manna. On the wilderness journey, the people of Israel were fed each day with manna from heaven. This simple and unchanging diet sustained them each day on the journey.

Also in our time the Lord feeds His flock with the simple manna of His Word. This Word is unchanging and sustains the child of God on the journey to the promised land. It is good to be in the care of the Good Shepherd! We can say as the psalmist David did: when the Lord is our shepherd, we lack nothing (Ps. 23).

The word of the gospel is our food and in it is the power of God (Rom. 1:16). This food was the source of power for the Old Testament wilderness travelers. It was the source of strength for our forefathers in faith who have finished their journey and reached their destination. It remains the same source of strength that will bring us – and generations to come – to our eternal home.

In 2020, we experienced a time unlike any that most of us have seen in our lives. This affected our daily lives and the work of God’s kingdom. Yet we experienced that the Good Shepherd still cares for His flock.

As we begin a new year and wonder what 2021 will bring, we yet remain in the security of God’s kingdom and His unchanging Word. As God has guided and blessed His kingdom in years past, may He bless us and the work of His kingdom in the coming year as well. ♦

COLUMN

Is God in Control?



Allen Pirness

The author of the first article of a new Column feature in 2021 Voice of Zion, Allen Pirness writes from his home near Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, where he is a speaker for the Lethbridge Laestadian Lutheran congregation, husband to Jessica, father of four, and a commodities trader for Market Place Commodities.

WE MOVED OUT OF THE CITY to a small, rural property a couple years ago. It has given our growing family more space and has turned into a peaceful sanctuary during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, we ordered an espresso machine from Italy and a wood-fired pizza oven so we can have more of what we enjoy right at home.

After a few weeks of working from home, I went back to working from the office in the city. Turning my truck into our driveway often fills my heart with happiness and relief to be home.

Amid the chaos of the immediate needs of little children one also finds the example of receiving everything as it is provided. I have regularly sat, after the kids are asleep, in the recliner in the quiet living room, listening to an evening devotion that has spoken about the security of God’s kingdom. I have needed this assurance to be brought to mind so often.

In my home congregation, we have needed to modify our church service gatherings somewhat. So far we haven’t needed to adjust to wearing a face covering at services. I will need to comply if that becomes our reality also. I need to see my travel friends at church. If they decided not to attend anymore because of these restrictions, my endeavor would be that much lonelier and more difficult. The enemy could surely find me more easily.

So many other things have changed with the pandemic. I listened intently at a Beef Industry Conference as a speaker asked us all to consider how to combat negative perceptions the industry faces, only to encounter an empty meat section in the grocery store a few weeks later because “the Virus” shut down the supply chain.

I sat in awe at my computer watching wave after wave of panic-selling roll through the markets as billions of dollars of value evaporated because the appetite for risk changes so quickly.

I visited with a coworker about the angst he heard from a broker in Asia who was seeing global trade stalling as the credit markets seized and the government-infused liquidity wasn’t helping soon enough. For a moment, we again saw how much we need each other around the world. I didn’t see this coming, but God knew all along.

I do not know what is yet to come. In some ways, I think we have experienced the heavy stress of wartime during this time of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has been coupled with ensuing economic and social upheaval. I sometimes wonder how society will emerge from this time. I think the shock and speed of the change has plunged so many into the dark, conspiratorial thoughts of contemplating this time as a nefariously arranged transfer of earthly wealth and power to the “elites.”

God shows His power to call the elect unto Him in ways and at a speed that we cannot comprehend. Instead of heeding the invitation to enter in at the door of God’s kingdom, people of the world turn against each other, blaming, accusing and mistrusting. I have had to consider many times if I can still believe that God is in control.

Yet, God is in complete control. He has made known His perfect order amid the chaos in so many ways. I have seen that the sun comes up every day. The rain falls from the sky and plants emerge from the earth, transforming into food

for a hungry world. I have seen again how God has added another fresh new baby to our family and how the baby brings us all such wonderful excitement. I witnessed how LLC Winter and Summer services were transformed by God into such uplifting at-home events. I have more often thought of departed loved ones and the hopeful yearning for heaven this brings.

I have been strangely comforted by how simple, consistent, reliable things have become more meaningful. I am thankful I have friends who still need to visit by voice. Telephone conversations have often brought tears to my eyes because I have been able to experience the audible cues of someone who has wanted to talk. Visits in our homes and in the homes of journey friends have lingered because we have safely connected on meaningful topics. In visiting, I have found solace in the common endeavor of God’s children. There is contentment in facing reality. It has required me again to trust that God will provide for today.

During this time also I have experienced, most importantly, the cleansing power of the preached gospel of the forgiveness of all sins in Jesus’ name and blood. It has miraculously lifted me, without fail, from the miry clay of temptation, doubt and sin and their effects. It has righted my course on the sure pathway that will take me to my eternal home in heaven. It makes it possible to live in a chaotic world when I own the living hope of heaven in my heart. This will only last a moment longer. The wayfarer, though still a fool to the world, has almost made it safely home. ♦

News and Notes from LLC

Eric Jurmu

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2021!

The year 2020 was like no other in recent memory. What started as a normal year has certainly changed in ways that we could not have predicted. Due to the pandemic, Winter and Summer Services were moved to an online environment, foreign mission trips were postponed, confirmation schools were scheduled and rescheduled, most of the summer camps were canceled and local congregations adjusted their service arrangements.

We became familiar with distance learning, working from home, limits to social gathering and so on. Many things have changed around us and there may have been sorrows and trials, yet around us we see God's abundant blessings. The greatest blessing is that one has been preserved in faith and can enter the new year as a child of God. Thus we face another year securely trusting in God's guidance and direction for our own personal endeavor of faith and also for the work of His kingdom.

It has been heartwarming to see the care and generosity of believers in supporting the work. At the beginning of 2021, we prayerfully ask for God's continued blessings. Most of all, the child of God has a living hope that one day faith will be changed to eternal life in the glory of heaven.

LLC Update Tour Continues

The LLC Update Tour was partially completed in 2020 as scheduled. Due to the pandemic, a number of congregation stops have been postponed into 2021. We have found the tour, which happens every three years, to be an important and needed means of communication throughout North American Zion. The plan is to complete the tour as early in the year as possible.

Staff Changes

Kathy Laho will be retiring from her position as LLC Communications Assistant early in 2021. A notice for filling this position has been sent to LLC congregations. Kathy has served in LLC work for many years and will be missed at the office. We wish Kathy God's blessings for the days and years to come!

2021 LLC Winter Services

We extend a heartfelt welcome to 2021 LLC Phoenix Winter Services March 18–21. The current plan is to hold the services at the Phoenix church. Services are also scheduled to be held Wednesday, March 17, in Prescott Valley.

The theme chosen for services is *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth* (John 17:17). The topic for the congregation discussion evening will be based on this theme and will be presented by Sam Roiko.

2021 LLC Summer Services

2021 LLC Summer Services are scheduled for July 1–4 in Marquette, Michigan. Please see additional information on page 15.

Confirmation Schools 2021

Planning for 2021 Confirmation Schools began with a web conference for directors and teachers on Monday, December 8. There will be eight camps this year, each planning for 30–35 students, with the exception of Stony Lake which can handle additional students due to the recent renovation. Online sign up began on January 4.

New LLC Office Building

Recently we've communicated plans to our member congregations regarding the purchase of a facility that we will use as our central office after the lease expires at our current location. The lease for the current LLC office space is expiring in 2021 and over a sixty-percent increase was planned in negotiations of a new lease. The purchase of the building in Monticello, Minnesota, is under contract.

Currently a 60-day due diligence period allows discussion with city officials and exploration of buildout costs. With the purchase of the new building and subsequent buildout, monthly costs are expected to be similar to current expenses. The closing is scheduled for February 25. Information will be communicated regularly to LLC congregations as the project develops.

Seasonal Positions Open

Seasonal positions for 2021 are available at each of our camp facilities, including core counselor, lifeguard, kitchen help, and caretaker's assistant positions. Look for the information sent to your congregation. Contact LLC Facility Manager Phil Jurmu (pjurmu@llchurch.org) for additional information. Please submit your application by completing the Camp Work Application online.

Silver Springs Development

The LLC Facilities Committee, along with the Silver Springs Development Committee (SSDC) and Management Committee (SSMC) met at the LLC office on December 3, to consider future development at Silver Springs. The meeting prioritized five immediate needs and coordinators will communicate those plans to LLC congregations early in 2021.

Publications Updates

- The Communications Department intends to publish two books in the coming months. One is titled *The Heavenly Father's Gift*, which is a sequel to *Where Has the Heavenly Father Gone?*, an illustrated story originally published by the SRK. Our other new book will be *Christ is the Same Yesterday, Today and Forever*. The individual chapters of this book have been printed in the *Voice of*

Zion in 2019–2020 issues, and now they will be compiled into a book.

- We excitedly await the publication of *Easter Messenger*, the LLC's new Easter magazine. *Voice of Zion* subscribers can watch for this new publication in the mail mid-March.
- Speaking of the mail, we are aware that some subscribers have recently experienced delays in receiving their periodicals in a timely fashion. This appears to be due to the fact that we utilize bulk mail to reduce postage and subscription costs. We are investigating ways to avoid this in the future.
- The *Voice of Zion* contained an insert in the October, November and December issues. The insert, called *Round the table*, aims to provide education, inspiration and activities that foster connections and discussion. We have received appreciative feedback on the insert, for which we are thankful. In 2021, we will publish *Round the table* every other month, in the February, April, June, August, October and December issues of the *Voice of Zion*.
- The Communications Department made an effort to provide a variety of digital content around the Christmas holidays. These efforts have been well received, and we are considering ways to make such content available on a more regular basis.

Workshop for New Ministers

An online workshop for new ministers is scheduled for January 22–23 and will focus on a minister's responsibilities. The workshop aims to provide basic information, resources and support for pastoral duties. This first workshop for new ministers is especially intended for ministers called in 2017 or later. Information about the workshop has been sent to congregation contacts.

Mission Work Update

- A church facility was recently completed in Busumbala, Gambia.
- Construction of the church facility in Atimé, Togo, is now underway.
- Weekly online services for Ecuador have been scheduled through May 2021.
- Recorded devotions are being delivered in WhatsApp in both English and French for congregations in Africa and Pakistan.
- Evening devotions have been scheduled for four evenings per week through 2021.

Operating Plan

At the beginning of 2021 preparation for the 2022 LLC Operating Plan has begun. The theme chosen are words of Jesus, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness* (Matt. 6:33). The Operating Plan is an important tool for office staff as it gives clear direction to the work of the LLC.

God has given us a blessed time of work; may God continue to guide and bless our new year as only He can. ♦

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MISSION WORK
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I Heard the Voice
of My Creator

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YOUTH:

We Have a Future
and a Hope

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The Best Words
in the Best Order –
and God's Blessing

2021 LLC LECTINARY

January 17, 2021
2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Jesus reveals His divine power
Ps. 105:2–5,39–42; Isa. 62:1–3;
Titus 1:1–3; Luke 4:16–21;
Mark 1:14,15

January 24, 2021
3rd Sunday after Epiphany
Jesus awakens faith
Ps. 102:15–22; Deut. 32:36–39;
2 Cor. 1:3–7; Mark 1:29–39

EASTER PERIOD – THE
SUNDAYS BEFORE LENT

January 31, 2021
Septuagesima
(3rd Sunday before Lent)
Unmerited grace
Ps. 18:1–6; 1 Sam. 16:1–13;
Rom. 9:11–23; Luke 17:7–10

February 7, 2021
Candlemas
**Christ, the radiance
of God's glory**
Ps. 48:10–14; Mal. 3:1,2;
1 John 1:5–7; Luke 2:22–33
Alt. Texts: John 1:14–18;
John 12:35–36

February 14, 2021
Shrove Sunday
The sacrificial way of God's love
Ps. 31:1–5; Ezek. 18:30–32;
1 Cor. 13; 1 Tim. 2:4–6;
Mark 10:32–45

An Opportunity in God’s Plan

Emmanuel Ametsife

AFTER A FOUR-HOUR FLIGHT, the pilot began preparations for landing. From the plane's window, I could see a big town between the flanks of mountains and the seashore. We flew over a bay and saw the Freetown Airport in Lungi, Sierra Leone. According to the flight announcement, it was 4:30 p.m. and we could loosen our seatbelts. That was on March 19, 2020. I had come to Sierra Leone from Togo for an eight-day mission trip.

After a long and complex check-out process due to COVID-19 measures, I was met by three people I had never seen before. I had only spoken on the telephone with one of them a day before. Edwin Missalie was a Sierra Leonean living in Gambia who came there purposely to help the gospel work and translate into the local language.

The three men welcomed me and placed my bags in a car. We then started a five-hour trip to Dohas Hotel in Bo, located in southern Sierra Leone some 240 kilometers from Freetown.

I was able to conduct mission work through service gatherings from one home to another, about ten places in different locations. In every home, family members, friends and neighbors came to hear the message of the forgiveness of sins and many believed. They said with amazement that they have heard the preaching of God's Word, but never yet this kind of gospel.

Closed Borders Kept Me in Exile

My departure from Freetown was scheduled for March 27th, but unfortunately land and air borders were closed because of the COVID-19 crisis. With no chance to leave the country, I decided to return to Bo to continue the mission work with Edwin, intending to support the believing families and gather in new homes to preach the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Although the COVID-19 situation presented difficulties and restrictions were enforced, we still felt the need to reach out to people who were wishing for us to preach the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

The number of believers grew to approximately 220–240. The preaching of the gospel and the visiting in family homes continued until we couldn't travel anymore.

At this time, the closure of borders and lockdown restrictions were common in almost all African countries. I became worried about myself and about my family in Togo. I communicated with them every single day and I knew that they needed me, but there was no way to get

home. My feeling of loneliness was great and not even tears could help. Then, I remembered some of the difficulties of Apostle Paul, especially in his travel to Macedonia and thought that the righteous Father knows everything, even our loneliness. This was a source of comfort.

God Cared for Me

Another source of comfort were the many friends, brothers and sisters from Africa, Finland, Sweden, US and Canada who were in contact with me through social media and encouraged me. The prayers of believers supported me very much. It is also important to note that my brother in faith, Edwin Missalie, who is originally from Sierra Leone, took good care of me there. He showed me love and so did the new believers among whom I visited and stayed. They shared my sorrows and comforted me with the gospel. I felt grateful to God for His merciful caring grace toward me, a sinful being, during the entire time of my exile in Sierra Leone.

As the months passed, I continually checked online for flights home, but flights were all grounded. In June, we finally got our first flight reservation, for the 22nd. We traveled to the Lungi Airport under the special COVID-19 travel restrictions, but the flight was canceled and we had to return to Bo. Another flight scheduled for July 2 was also canceled.

After many such flight cancelations, it was finally on August 11 that I boarded an airplane that flew. God did open the way for me to come join my patient family. My travel companion, Edwin, also joined his family in Gambia.

Tools in the Hand of the Lord

In my absence, there had been challenges for my family, but God’s care carried them and we can continue to trust in Him. I extend thanks and recognition to all the believers around the world for their prayers and moral support. Thanks to SRK, SFC, LLC and ELLT for the comfort, the encouragement and the support they have given me and my family during this hard time.

It was difficult at the beginning when our passage home was blocked, but I have understood later that this was part of God's plan for the rooting of the believers in Sierra Leone and for the benefit of His kingdom. As a message to all missionaries in God's kingdom: we are only work tools in the hand of the Lord. He is sovereign and His will transcends any of our selfish thoughts.

May the caravan of God's kingdom continue its way according to the will of the heavenly Father and regardless of dogs barking. ♦



Service guests gathered during Emmanuel's extended stay in Sierra Leone.

PHOTO: EMMANUEL AMETSIFE

The Gift of Baptism

Jeremy Honga

As the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

Luke 3:15–18,21,22

Our text tells of John the Baptist, the prophet in the wilderness. The cousin of Jesus Christ, John was a chosen messenger of God who would prepare the way for Christ. Prophet Isaiah foretold of John and his mission, as Luke recorded: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord” (3:4). Prior to our text, it is recorded that God placed His word into John the Baptist in the wilderness. John, through his preaching, fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy. John faithfully preached the intended message of God, “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Luke 3:3). John baptized with water those who were able to repent and believe.

Baptism Is a Sacrament

The sacrament of baptism is established of God, instituted by Christ: “Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:18–20).

A sacrament can be described as a sign or a symbol. It is also an oath, a solemn pledge. In *The Treasure Hidden in A Field*, Juhani Uljas writes that baptism is the sign of a covenant. God’s new

Jesus Awakens Faith

Carey Simonson

Forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

Mark 1:29–39

testament covenant is the promise of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ, and baptism is its sign. Our covenant to God in baptism is to believe in that promise of salvation, doing so in faith and good conscience.

Faith First, Then Baptism

There were many who came to baptisms of John. Some received the gospel word and the grace to believe. They received baptism also. Others came with hearts of unbelief. To them John spoke directly, “O generation of vipers...bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:7,8).

Here the order established by God is shown: preaching the gospel, faith, baptism. Similarly, on Pentecost Peter spoke a sermon of repentance: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:38,41).

The words of Jesus in His baptismal command also support this: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). Faith is not obtained through baptism, but rather one who receives the gift of faith desires baptism.

Jesus spoke of the faith that little children have (Matt. 19:14). Thus, in God’s kingdom we understand an infant to be a worthy recipient of baptism. Believing mothers and fathers desire to bring their children into the covenant of faith and good conscience, Holy Baptism, according to the command of Christ. Nonetheless, children who die before having the opportunity to be baptized are still heaven-acceptable because they have faith. St. Augustine wrote, “Not by the lacking of a sacrament, but by the despising of a sacrament is one damned.”

John Prepared the Way for the Savior

The people mused about John, wondering “whether he were the Christ or not.” Surely God’s power was evident through John’s preaching and when people were converted. This caused witnesses to wonder. John answered them, explaining

that he is preparing the way to the new covenant, Jesus Christ. He exhorts them to believe upon Him, that through Him is offered salvation or judgment: “he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”

Thus in preaching and in baptism, the power or glory is not John’s or any other man’s, but it is of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God’s people own the simple and living gospel message. They serve it with humility and by the power of God.

The baptism of Jesus by John was a significant event. During the baptism, Jesus prayed and the heavens opened. The Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and the voice of God was heard. This event made it known that this was Christ, the Son of God (John 1:32–34).

Soon thereafter, John was cast into prison and Jesus began His public ministry. His message was like that of John. He preached “the gospel of the kingdom of God, saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14,15). Jesus taught His disciples and commissioned them to likewise preach and baptize, granting them power of the same Holy Spirit. Yet today the saving gospel message is preached from God’s kingdom to penitent sinners.

Faith and a Good Conscience

In baptism, our covenant with God is to keep faith and good conscience. We should hold this covenant dear to our hearts every moment. The three-fold enemy is relentless, though, and this brings the child of God a lifelong battle. So too is the journey of faith a lifelong endeavor. Only at the end of life do we receive the crown of life.

To this end, baptism exhorts us to endeavor on the way of faith and “deadened the powers of sin,” as we read in *Handbook of Sacred Acts*. Baptism teaches us to remain in the fellowship of the congregation of God and in the care and unity of the Holy Spirit therein. There we find forgiveness of our sins and strength to continue our journey. We conclude that while the sacrament of baptism is indeed a mystery, it remains an esteemed, God-given treasure to one with faith. ♦

The first chapter of Mark briefly covers the main events of Jesus’s life prior to His public ministry: the ministry of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness and the calling of Jesus’ disciples.

Just before our text, Jesus was in Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee, about 50 km or 30 miles from His childhood home in Nazareth. He went into the synagogue and taught. The listeners “were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes” (verse 22). In the synagogue, Jesus cleansed a man from an unclean spirit. Mark records that “immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee” (verse 28).

Jesus Heals Many

Our text starts with Jesus and His disciples leaving the synagogue and going to Simon Peter’s and Andrew’s house, just as we might go to someone’s house after church. There, Jesus healed Simon Peter’s mother-in-law. Later in the evening, “all the city was gathered together at the door” and Jesus healed many that were sick and cast out many devils. We can only imagine the joy experienced by those that Jesus healed and their loved ones. Jesus is able to heal all sickness and even bring people back to life (Luke 7:15).

The next day Jesus left Capernaum, where Peter and Andrew lived, to be alone and pray. Peter and some others found Jesus and told him that “all men seek thee.” Jesus did not return to Capernaum but said “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.” Peter may have wanted the healing to continue in his city.

Jesus Calls Sinners to Repentance

The main message of our text is that Jesus awakens faith. Although temporal health is important and a great gift from God, it pales in comparison to spiritual health and peace with God. Jesus came not only to heal the temporal illnesses of people in Capernaum, but to heal spiritual illness and to awaken faith in people of every city and country. Jesus said: “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). He also taught “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

The work of Jesus continues today through the Holy Spirit in God’s kingdom (John 16:7,8). God’s children have been given authority to preach the gospel of the forgiveness of sins to all people (John 20:22,23). “He said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15,16). The gospel awakens faith.

The Gospel’s Healing Power

The healing power of the gospel of the forgiveness of sins can remove sin as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Considering this, the songwriter encourages us all to become partakers of this grace and to remain believing each day regardless of our temporal health: “My child, why are you standing outside the temple doors? There’s honey here and manna – the Lord is kind and sweet. He calls with love alluring where truth and mercy meet...From day to arid darkness, oh, may I never leave; but let me in the sunshine the Word of grace believe, and drink the lovingkindness He showers from above within His temple, knowing His wondrous peace and love!” (SHZ 155). ♦

God Gives Us a Future with Hope

George Koivukangas

Have you been tired and lonely, doubting and fearful? We live in very uncertain times. The turmoil of the darkening world roils around us. It sometimes seems that that which is right is deemed wrong, and that which is wrong is deemed right. Sin no longer is called sin, and any lifestyle is acceptable. For some, the Bible is no longer God’s Word and can be disregarded.

We have our own personal struggles in our endeavor of living faith. Life also brings sorrows that we struggle with. A wrong understanding and teaching has slowly crept into Zion, and love has waxed cold. Even these events have weighed heavily and have made the journey feel difficult and slow. Nonetheless, Jesus says unto you, “Fear not little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Assured of His Guidance

We are secure here in the midst of God’s flock, in the care of the loving congregation, the mother. We are so small before God, yet we can be assured of His guidance and love through His Holy Spirit. All He asks of us is that we believe with the tender heart and simple mind of a little child.

We need not be fearful or doubting. We can place our hope and trust in our dear heavenly Father. He will not leave you or me. He will not forsake us, no matter how far we may have wandered. We can be secure in the grace promises of the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

Throughout time, whenever a child of God has struggled with heavy trials and oppression, God has approached and offered love and guidance. Those who here persevered with God-given hope and trust are now saints of God in the bosom of the heavenly Father.

Thoughts of Peace

God has thoughts of peace and blessings for us. As we can read in the Bible, He desires to give us a future with hope. This message was given during the time of Prophet Jeremiah, when the children of Israel suffered tremendously. Sin had overtaken many. They did not care for matters. False prophets and teachers began to preach a wrong doctrine. Many had itching ears and followed the false prophets into unbelief.

God brought His punishment on the people for their unbelief. King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and took captive the vast majority of the people. Many died in battle or lost everything and were then in captivity in a foreign land. They were fearful and without hope.

God nonetheless sent them a beautiful message of love and hope by the hand of Jeremiah. He told them to build homes and live in them. To plant gardens and eat of the fruit of them. To marry and have sons and daughters. To have them marry and have children of their own, so that the congregation of God would increase.

God through Jeremiah encouraged them to pray on behalf of leaders, for peace so that they could live in that peace. He warned them of false prophets and teachers that preached a sermon of unbelief. God said He had not sent those teachers.

He then said to them, I have thoughts of peace for you. I desire to give you a future with hope. Pray, I hear your prayers and anguished pleas, and I will hearken unto you. (Jer. 29) This is the loving message of God unto His children today also. He sees and knows your anguish, sorrows and troubles. He is very near. He has not forgotten you.

A People of Living Hope

It pays to believe, to preserve faith and a good conscience. To put our trust upon Him. We are a people of living hope. Even amidst sorrow, difficulties or despair we have the greatest reason to rejoice! The message of salvation resounds from the tabernacle of God. It resonates with your soul, saved through living faith. Be of good comfort! We are secure in the living hope of heaven. We are one day closer to those glorious shores.

The psalmist also reminds us of the multitude of loving thoughts God has for us: “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee” (Ps. 139:17,18).

These words, though originally uttered long ago, are meant now for us too, directly from the heart of God. We have awakened unto this new day, and through His grace we are yet His children. This is where we long to remain. ♦



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LORI LOUKUSA

This photo of a youth gathering was taken at the Haataja home in September 1974. L-R: Randy Keranen, Jon Bloomquist, Steve Kallinen and Leslie Ylitalo.

I Heard the Voice of My Creator

Lori Loukusa

Some decades ago, in a small town in northern Minnesota, a young boy began a search. He didn’t even really know that he was searching, or what he sought, but God began His work. This boy, Jon Bloomquist – now a husband, father and grandfather – tells about this time as a young boy and then a teenager, when God reached out to him and ultimately called him into His kingdom. Jon was given grace to believe his sins forgiven and to travel as one of God’s own in His kingdom of children. This is Jon’s story, as told to Lori Loukusa.

I GREW UP IN A STABLE, HAPPY HOME and was provided a religious upbringing. We went to mass at the Roman Catholic Church every Sunday, but we didn’t really discuss faith matters much at home. I had my First Communion when I was six years old and was confirmed when I was eight years old. I went to confession as prescribed. For some years, I served as an altar boy assisting the priest with the mass. Altar boys lit candles before mass began and snuffed them out afterward. During the mass the altar boys would pour water for the priest’s hand washing and to mix wine, then ring a small bell when the priest elevated the bread and wine, and finally the altar boys assisted the priest with the communion. There was a lot of ritual in all of this. Our Sunday school was held on Saturday and was called Catechism instead of Sunday school. I remember being annoyed that it was on Saturday, because when they started Saturday basketball for the young kids in our town, I wasn’t able to go. I went to Catechism instead.

God Sheltered Me

As a child, I was quite serious-minded. Without even really knowing it, I had periods of awakening and searching from quite a young age. When 7th and 8th grade dances and other social events came up, I had no interest in them. I never went. I didn’t connect with my classmates in that way. Looking back, I see that God was protecting and sheltering me. Some summers, we had a week of Bible school, and I was always very earnest about church. When I was 14 or 15, I remember seeing my grandma’s Bible on the shelf. I started looking at it and reading it some. I think it was the first that I had really read the Bible. At times I tried to be a good Christian. I wanted to do what was right and please God, but when it all came from my own effort, it didn’t have any effect. I suppose I got some sort of temporary satisfaction from trying, but that’s all.

When I was 15, I began having health problems and that summer I was in the hospital for five days. I had been working, but I couldn’t work when I was convalescing. I thought a lot, it’s not like they were new thoughts so much as just more time to ponder things. Health issues at so young an age may have had an effect on me, causing me to view life in a more serious way.



Some graduates of 1975 Menahga High School. Back row, L-R: Karen (Nevala) Johnson, Jon Bloomquist, David Hendrickson and Randy Keranen. Front row, L-R: Carol (Skoog) Hillstrom, Lori (Haataja) Loukusa, Elaine (Hillukka) Nikula and Sandra (Siltala) Tokola.

When I was a junior in high school, I began having visits with the believers who were in my grade. I don’t know that I had really noticed them so much before that time. Some of the classes we were in were quite small, and we got to know each other better. That’s when we began to visit about faith matters. I think the stumbling stone for me was the Kingdom of God. I couldn’t understand or accept their understanding of it. Somewhere it seems that there was a lull in our discussions – we could debate only so much. During that lull, I went to a fellowship of Christian athletes gathering with a younger friend. The gathering was in a home and there were people who had been “born again.” They prayed and talked about Jesus and about their experiences. I listened to the personal stories but talked about them afterward with the friend who had also been there. I asked him what he thought, and he shrugged his shoulders. I agreed with him, and we never went back. During this period, somewhere along the way, I began to sense that my believing classmates were right. It was a feeling I had.

I Wanted to Attend a Different Church

My birthday was approaching, and I knew that my mom was going to ask me what I wanted for my birthday. I can still remember the moment. Mom was going from the sink to the stove when she asked me. I told her that I want to go to a different church. I suppose that my answer both surprised and upset her, and she nearly dropped the frying pan on the stove.

What I got for my birthday was a copy of the Living Bible, which was a contemporary translation. I had been reading the old King James version some, and I didn’t really like the contemporary Bible, so I gave it back. I remember asking mom why I have to go to the Catholic church if I didn’t believe that way. My parents then agreed to let me start going to services with the believers as long as I also kept going to mass at the Catholic church. That became possible in the summer months because with tourists in the area, there was mass on Saturday which fulfilled the Sunday morning obligation.

I remember the day I went to the Wolf Lake church for the first time, a week or two after my birthday. I was able to take my parent’s car. I drove by the church about 10 minutes before the scheduled service, but there was nobody there. I drove a ways past and turned around, and when I went back a boy I recognized was riding his bike into the parking lot. I knew then it was the right place. But now I was really nervous. Instead of stopping at the church, I drove back into Wolf Lake. When I got to the only intersection in town, I got mad at myself: *I’m not going to drive all this way and not go!* I turned around and went to the church. I remember standing outside on the steps leaning against the iron-pipe railings with those friends I knew from school. But then, when everyone went in, I didn’t want to sit with them. I walked in along the left side and sat by myself in the bench.

God Arranged Services Just for Me

The first sermon was a Finnish sermon by Ruben Alajoki, which Peter Nevala translated. I didn’t understand the language and had never heard a translation, so I had a hard time following it. The music was also different than what I was used to. It all felt strange. But the second sermon, by Peter Nevala, was in English. I clearly remember that the text was from Matthew, chapter 10. The last part of that text says: “He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his

cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” I know Peter Nevala didn’t know who I was, and he probably had no clue I was there. I don’t remember precisely anything that he said, but I knew that this was the right place. Later, I realized that God had arranged those services just for me.

When I went to services again in the weeks that followed, it always felt like an angel was speaking. The Word was so different, it was full of life. I felt that now I could hear the voice of my Creator. But I still didn’t know what to do. I went to gatherings with the young people from church, and some were those I’d gotten to know at school. My parents weren’t happy about any of this, but I was able to keep going as long as I went to the Catholic mass on Saturdays.

In July, a minister from Finland, Oiva Tölli, was serving at the Westside congregation’s church near Sebekä. I rode there with Peter and Evelyn Nevala and their girls. When we got to the services, Peter introduced me to Oiva. There wasn’t time then to visit, just to greet, but I can still remember seeing him in the church foyer and how he looked at me with interest. On the way home, Peter told me that he had been visiting with Oiva, who thought since I was Catholic, I might not know what to do to repent. Peter asked me: Is that right? I answered yes, that’s right. I don’t know what to do. He then asked me if I understood that I was on the outside of God’s Kingdom. Yes, I understood that. I knew that I wasn’t one of them.

I Learned What I Had to Do

Peter asked me then if I understood and felt that I was a sinner. I did, and tears began to flow. He then asked me if I wanted to have my sins forgiven. I said, yes, and the Nevala family all preached the gospel to me. It felt like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders! When they stopped their little green Volvo station wagon in front of my parent’s house to let me off, it felt like my feet never touched the ground as I walked to the house.

I remember taking a shower the next morning and singing in my head, “The Hour in Gethsemane” and another church song. I could only sing one verse since I couldn’t remember the words. I went to services that morning in Wolf Lake. One lady introduced me to another, and said, “Did you hear that Jon was converted last night?” That’s when I realized what had taken place.

Sometime after that was the first time in my life that I practiced confession as a believer. I had wounded my conscience. The sin was burning inside me. I felt like I wasn’t even believing anymore. I asked Peter if I could come to visit. We were first sitting in the living room, the whole family, and I had this matter I wanted to confess. I began to speak, but Peter said I didn’t need to say anything about it there – we could visit in private. Later, I was able to confess what was bothering me, and Peter preached the gospel to me. This gave me peace and renewed my strength. That evening my young friend had also come. While Peter and I had our private visit, Evelyn and the girls took him to the garage to show him the pipe organ. While they were there, he received the grace of repentance. It was a happy evening. Peter drove us both home that night. I remember when he stopped in front of my house, tears were streaming down his cheeks. He said, “You don’t know how much this has meant to us, how uplifting it has been.”

I didn’t fully understand then what Peter was feeling at the time, but later I realized more fully. He and God’s congregation had just been through a difficult spiritual warfare and heresy. Sometimes we can wonder if our faith is the correct faith, or if it is even real or not. The enemy tempts us and causes us to doubt. Then when we see someone receive the “joy of the finder,” how uplifting it is! It was also uplifting to Peter to see that God had called a lost one into His kingdom.

God Knew What I Needed

Though I was so thankful to be a believer, those early years weren’t all easy. I sometimes went to services thinking that maybe this is the last time, I have so many doubts. When I got there, it was like God knew: He knew what I needed, just like that first time I went to services in Wolf Lake. God had arranged the services just for me. I’ve had that happen numerous times in my life, even since those early years. It can feel like there is no way forward, and there are so many things that reason wars against. I think often of when Jesus spoke about eating His body and drinking His blood. Many people couldn’t understand and accept it, thousands of people left, and Jesus turned to those that were still there and said, “Will ye also go away?” Then Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” When I’ve been in that place and have come to a similar fork in the road, I know that there is no other place to go, no other place where there is life and hope.

I was able to experience how God cared for me through my new brothers and sisters in faith. Through the years, I visited in the homes of many believing friends. When I was leaving for Jämsä Opisto in 1982, I was surprised at how many came to wish me goodbye. One sister said to me, you’re our boy. Then I realized that they all thought of me as their boy, somehow. I was always warmly received and felt right at home. I never experienced difficulty fitting in or being accepted.

Now, 46 years later, this is all still sometimes hard to believe. I’ve been given the grace to dwell in God’s kingdom the majority of my life. When I look back, I see God’s finger in my life even in the years before I received the grace of repentance. I’ve definitely experienced what Jesus said: “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother...for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matt. 19:29). ♦

Hope and Hopelessness

Elaine Nikula

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer. – Romans 12:12

TODAY, I HOLD ON TO HOPE like a precious gem, because I lived through times when hope faded. I suffered for years with chronic fatigue. Imagine doing the washing, cooking, shopping and cleaning and giving eleven children time and attention when all you want to do is take another nap. It was thirty years before I saw a change for the better in energy. It was discouraging to say the least. I cried into my pillow at times, wondering if I would ever find my way out of the molasses of fatigue.

My despair over unbelieving loved ones also left me stuck in sadness. I needed time to grieve, but eventually it became an unpleasant place to be, and I knew that I did not want to live there. By God’s grace and an encouraging husband, I put away sad thoughts and began to count my blessings. It did not come quickly. I slowly shifted my thinking, reminding myself there is always hope for those who left faith.

One Can Always Hope

How important it is to hope! Hope is a powerful force in the world. Not only do we feel its uplifting effects very intimately, but it can mean the difference between survival or not. It takes hope to hang on with your fingernails when you are falling over a cliff. Doctors who must give patients poor prognoses attempt to leave those patients with hope. Patients who hope may experience better outcomes.

Is it always easy to hope? The world around us, with continuous updates on civil unrest, pandemic statistics and moral deterioration, can cause anxiety and fear. There is much we cannot control, and feelings of hopelessness for the future can overwhelm. It’s refreshing to turn off the news and social media and turn on hopeful songs of Zion or sermons that feed our soul.

Hope Can Feel Impossible

Nonetheless, it can be difficult to be hopeful. Sometimes hope can feel impossible. Depression, addiction and other illnesses can affect one’s ability to hope. It can feel that one is locked behind a door without a key. It is a dark tunnel that sucks out confidence, motivation and happiness. Sufferers cannot see a way out. It may require therapies under the guidance of healthcare professionals to once again open the door to joy and hope.

Hope thrives in soil that is watered with happy, encouraging thoughts and actions. The shift to positive thinking provides the foundation of hope. We can strive to create the atmosphere in our home and life by what we think, say and do.

Start at Home

If we wish to cultivate a hopeful atmosphere in the world, we need to start at home. A home with a spirit of hope is a delightful place. Children are sensitive to whether adults project a positive or gloomy demeanor.

Parents are mirrors to their children. What do children see when the family faces disobedient teens or a financial crisis, for example? Is the reaction anger, bitterness, blame and despair? Or would children learn to live in hope if parents reacted with uplifting words? What kind of difference could it make if parents and children together lifted their sorrow to God in prayer?

Prayer is communication to God of one’s hopes; prayer seems futile without hope. After all, hope requires trust in something or someone outside of oneself. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

Does Hope Guarantee Results?

Despite the power of hope, it does not offer guarantees. No matter how fiercely we hope, there is no assurance that God will grant our desires. God knows exactly what

we need, and that is not always what we think. Thus we pray, “Thy will be done.” Nonetheless, hope is one thing that others cannot take away from us. If all else is gone, hope can carry us through the darkest times.

Today, I face new challenges, but I’m grateful for those experiences that have given me a hopeful spirit. Hope is a bird that lifts its voice in song at the hint of dawn. It adds a happy sparkle in life. It’s fun to reminisce about the past, but it’s exciting to dream and plan for the future. Martin Luther stated, “Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.”

Hope is a bird that lifts its voice in song at the hint of dawn.

The Special Hope of a Child of God

How wonderful it is to hope as a child of God! How comforting it is to trust that our almighty God is in control. When we continue putting sin away in the living gospel of forgiveness in Jesus’ name and blood, we stand in God’s grace having a beautiful hope of heaven.

The enemy of souls, however, often preaches a sermon of hopelessness: “it isn’t worth it. You can’t make it. You will never get to heaven.” We might begin to believe these hopeless sermons, but remember: satan has lied from the very beginning. Hope is present even if we don’t see it.

If you find yourself doubting or without hope, be assured that God’s promises are true. As children of God, we can look ahead with contentment, joy and peace...and a powerful hope that anchors our souls to God’s living congregation and carries us home. We can remember, as did the writer to the Hebrews, that hope has been set before us, “hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:19). ♦

Addiction: Learning to Cope and to Hope

Leanne Niemela

THE DISEASE OF ADDICTION has caused me to lose the husband I knew and my children their father as they knew him. When we began to recognize that we were dealing with addiction, a professional laid out the treatment plan and the work involved in recovering. He said it took about five years of solid recovery work for someone with addiction to be completely healthy again. I remember thinking: *not us. We love each other! How could this break our home and our marriage?* Love has not been enough to save my marriage and family from addiction.

Addiction Is a Disease

I have since learned that addiction is a chronic relapsing disorder of the brain that impacts behavior and choices. The substance that is used affects the reward circuitry of the brain, causing a release of the neurotransmitter dopamine, which produces a pleasurable feeling. This causes the individual to want more and repeat the behavior.

Initially, an individual has made a choice to use drugs or alcohol or to engage in another addictive behavior. Once the reward circuit is activated, the addiction cycle begins and the behavior in question no longer becomes a

choice, but rather a compulsion or obsession. This causes addiction to be recognized medically as a brain disorder. No one gets to choose how their body responds to using a substance or addictive behavior, and no one chooses to suffer from addiction.

Learning about the disease of addiction has helped relieve sorrow, hopelessness and fear. It helps to know that no one chooses to destroy their life through drugs or other addictions. It has helped me depersonalize the choices that have been made and instead view them as symptoms of the disease of addiction.

Sources of Hope

Educating myself has offered hope; I have learned that while addiction is not curable, it is completely treatable. Many people with addictions have learned to manage their disorder through self-care, self-awareness, therapy and group support and gone on to live healthy and happy lives. Knowing this gives me hope, and it drives a desire to stay connected to my husband, to remind him of things his addiction has convinced him he is not worthy of.

God’s Word also provides hope. The thirteenth verse of 1 Corinthians 10 teaches, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a





PHOTO: LIZ WIKMAN

Alice visiting Clint in May 2020.

did not think he would survive. Through lying in a prone position and receiving a plasma treatment, my dad was carried by the prayers of believers and began the slow, uphill journey of recovery.

During my dad’s hospitalization, none of us were allowed to visit him due to COVID regulations. He was brought to rehab alone also. He dreamed of seeing his family, and he wanted to be outside, watching the ocean waves.

My mom recovered quickly at home in Arizona, and she was eventually allowed to visit my dad through a window. This helped him recover even faster. When he was allowed one visitor, my mom finally got to see my dad in person.

After a harrowing trip back to Arizona, which included an emergency stop at a hospital in New Mexico, my dad was finally able to come home. Through a period of physical therapy, my dad gained his strength back, a day at a time.

It is difficult when a family member far away becomes so ill. I felt heavy sadness when we could not be with my parents and comfort them and each other in person. However, we truly felt the love of God’s kingdom – the helping hands of angels. We have been uplifted by the prayers of other that have given us strength to continue each day. We will never forget the love and support we received from God’s kingdom. ♦

way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” God promises to help provide a way out of difficulties and to give strength to endure the battles we face.

Healthy, Helpful Ways

Support groups help by teaching healthy ways to cope, how to be a healthy support for the loved one with an addiction, and helpful ways to communicate. This support comes from people who have been impacted by their loved ones’ addiction.

I have learned that family can positively influence when a person’s recovery is activated, so that has made it important to learn as much as I can. My loved one is still alive, even though the person he has become is no longer familiar. The thought that he might never recover, or that he might never be in our lives again or that his addiction could cause him to lose his life all cause great grief. Only the willing heart of the one who is addicted – with the help of God – can bring one back from the depths of addiction.

It brings peace when I remember that God’s ways are above my ways. He knows and sees all. He will continue to care for me, even if addiction creates a permanent hole where my loved one

used to be. Psalms 34:8 says, “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”

Fellowship and Forgiveness Ward off Doubts

It has been helpful to be among the believers during this trial. Addiction is complex and it involves behaviors that are so easy for the family to take personally or to get angry over. It has been important for me to be in the fellowship of family and friends and to attend services as often as I can. I find that when I do not do this, I am most vulnerable to doubts and temptations and start questioning God regarding the purpose of my pain. There the devil finds me at my weakest.

God has blessed me with a loving family and with friends that carry my family and me in love. This is the greatest blessing of all: they can forgive my sins and doubts. Without their love and forgiveness, it would be difficult to find reason for joy and to trust that God will continue to provide strength and to care for me. Psalms 34:15 brings much comfort: “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.” ♦

Carried by Prayer

Shari Byman

IN APRIL 2020, my mom and dad were on the road, trucking in Texas. A sibling told me mom and dad were not feeling well. I called my dad to ask how he was doing. He told me both he and my mom were not feeling so well, but that he would probably feel better in the morning.

We ended the call with God’s peace, but I was left with a feeling that something wasn’t right – I sensed my parents were very ill. I believe that God guided me to ask my dad to call for an ambulance. They were far away from other believers and since COVID was spreading, I felt it would be better if they got evaluated at a hospital.

My dad went to the hospital, and my mom stayed in the truck as she felt she was not as sick as dad. A believing friend heard about the situation and contacted someone she knew near Plano, Texas, to bring my mom necessities and food to make it through her quarantine.

My dad was diagnosed with COVID-19 on April 20 and immediately began treatment. However, his health continued to worsen. He was put on a ventilator, and the healthcare staff

Two Months in Texas

Clint Makela

IN APRIL, I was on the job driving truck, and my wife Alice was with me. As we drove toward Dallas, Texas, I started feeling like a flu was coming on. In Dallas, I started feeling very sick. I don’t remember much of that part of the trip, but somehow I was able to deliver the load. I made it to the truck stop in Terrel, Texas. There I asked Alice to call the ambulance because I felt like I was going to pass out.

In the ambulance, I drifted in and out of consciousness. Little did I know that I would stay in Texas for two months with COVID. I remember that I saw myself lying there and I wondered why I hadn’t died yet. Then, I saw a small light glowing next to me, so I knew I was still alive. I could feel then that God was with me.

When I awoke from the coma, the nurses said, “Welcome back!” The doctor told me I’d been so sick he didn’t think I could survive. This reminded me how fragile life is and how quickly one’s life can be taken. It’s been a long road to recovery, and I’m feeling pretty good now. Thank you all for your prayers. ♦

Quite the Journey

Alice Makela

AFTER MY HUSBAND CLINT was admitted to the hospital on April 20, I was flooded with emotions. He suffered so much, and he had great struggles with his oxygen levels. Clint was placed in a Rotoprone bed in the hope that it would help him breathe better. He was rotated onto his stomach quite often. A plasma treatment was suggested, and we gave consent.

Around the fifth day of his hospitalization, his oxygen levels were down to 50 percent, and he was still sedated and prone. Doctors ordered another dose of plasma treatment. Clint’s labs started improving. Hopelessness ran through me. Due to COVID restrictions, I could not be by his bedside, and that was so hard. I just prayed to God that Clint would pull through.

On April 29, Clint started showing signs of improvement. They tried weaning him off the ventilator, and he breathed on his own for thirty minutes. Over the next days, he progressed to two-hour trials of breathing without the ventilator. On May 7, he was taken off the ventilator altogether.

As days went by, Clint grew stronger. On May 26, I was able to visit him in Texas. I visited him through a window, talking to him on the phone. He was transferred to a rehabilitation center on June 1. He stayed there two weeks and regained his ability to walk and breathe. He was released on June 15, and we were soon homeward bound.

Clint has progressed very slowly, but he is home now. God has heard everyone’s prayers. We give thanks to God for bringing Clint back to us. It’s been quite the journey. ♦

Discussion Questions

1. What do you hope for in life?
2. What things in life have dimmed your hope? What has helped restore a hopeful outlook? What do trials of life teach us about the power of hope?
3. How has God shown you that He knows what you need in this life?
4. How can we approach and encourage one who seems to have lost hope? What are good things to say to this person? What should we avoid saying?
5. How can we foster a hopeful atmosphere among our family and in our home?
6. How does God remind us that He is our hope?

Two anonymous letters reflect hope for their children who have left faith.

Because I Love You

MY DEAR CHILD, because I love you, I write to you.

Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life. – Matt. 7:14

I am sorrowful for your sake over what you have given up. You have chosen the broad way.

God gave you special gifts. He gave you the gift of life. He gave you the gift of faith. He gave you a conscience. He gave you a believing home and taught you how to remain in faith. He taught you how to wash the sin away. So many blessings.

Dear child, your mother bore all of you, the family that God planned. You children showed such love for each other. You learned prayers, you heard the same teachings, you all attended services. You heard the gospel, and you were all part of our small home congregation.

God’s Word teaches us that this life will one day end. There will not be time to ask for forgiveness, as the end

will come in the twinkling of an eye. There will be two in the field, one shall be taken and the other left. Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. We want to have our name in the Book of Life so we can go to heaven with Jesus.

The broad way is the way of unbelief. The fruits of faith are not present there; they are only found in God’s kingdom. Love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith.

My dear child, God loves you. He offers grace and forgiveness. Remember the Father’s house, and today if you hear His voice, harden not your heart. The gospel can wash away the greatest sin of unbelief.

Because I love you,
Father ♦

Open Letter to My Child

DEAR LOVED ONE,

How I loved having you home this Christmas, your smile warming our home again!

Although this Christmas holiday was difficult with the pandemic restrictions, I was glad you decided to come and be part of the family pod again. As you return to your apartment, please know that our thoughts are with you every day.

Among the rush of cooking and wrapping, it was great to talk with you. However, there are some things that didn’t get said. I wish to say them here, in this open letter, hoping that any child who has left faith may read this and know that mom loves you and will always love you. Someday, you will chance to read this and know that your mom wrote this to you, each wayward child from a loving mother.

First of all, I am sorry that when you told me that you no longer believe, I talked about my sadness. Of course, I was sad and I still am sad, but this decision impacts you most. It is you I should have focused on, not my pain nor any other family member's hurt feelings.

I also insinuated that you made a hasty decision and were swept away by friends. This was not fair to you, and I am sorry. My response to you was my own emotional release. It was human, sure, but as a parent I should also regard your feelings and respect your decision.

You are certainly sad too, since leaving faith is a major departure from your home life and church environment.

You probably feel a bit homeless, and maybe you feel depressed too. Still, it was right to tell us the truth. It was honest. Honesty is a central principle of your upbringing and of the moral code that sustains a coherent society. Dad and I appreciate that you follow this principle. We also strive to respect your choice, which was probably made over a period of time and hours of contemplation.

I need you to know that no matter what decision you made or will make in the future, I love you. You were given to us by God and your life has been and will always be a blessing to us. You have delighted us with your love and generous personality. That will never change.

I wish for you to find happiness. I want you to succeed in your chosen career, to have friends, perhaps a spouse and children. If you have children, I want to be a loving grandparent to your children. Those wishes are firm and honest from me to you.

You know that this same love I have for you extends even into my prayers to God on your behalf. I pray for your safety, success, happiness in this life. Because you know me so well and you have known faith, you understand that I will continue to pray that God will call you back to His kingdom. As a parent, I will always be waiting for that return, and I long to bless you.

Even this issue is in God's hands.

Loving you always,
Mom ♦



We Have a Future and a Hope

HOW DO TEENS VIEW THE FUTURE? Do teens have a hopeful outlook? Are we in despair over social, financial or personal decisions before us? This youth page explores some issues that can cause distress. These writers from the Toronto, Ontario, congregation remind us that we are not alone and that we can trust in God’s care for us.

Hope for the Hopeless

Karina Haapala

BY DEFINITION, HOPE MEANS TO CHERISH a desire with anticipation. Without hope, nothing is anticipated or desired, leading to despair. I’m sure we can all relate to the feeling of hopelessness on some level.

In our temporal lives we have many decisions to make, especially as young people. Beginning life as an adult can be scary, and we are faced with choices that may impact the rest of our lives. Sometimes things don’t work out as we had hoped and with it may come the feeling of hopelessness. How will I ever know what the right path is for me? How will I ever find my dream job, a spouse, or even make enough money to pay my bills?

These questions and fears can cause us to doubt and begin to feel like it is hopeless to even try.

As believers we know that above all we have the hope of heaven. Life has its ups and downs and doubts may weigh heavily on our hearts. But if we continue putting sin away, we will always have the hope of eternal life in heaven. In our daily life endeavor, we can pray about difficult decisions and that our efforts will be blessed.

When things don’t work out the way we plan we may find it difficult to accept and understand. We can trust, however, that God has a plan for us. When faced with difficult times it is important to pray to God for guidance and for the ability to accept His will. And when it seems like all hope is lost, we can turn to Him.

God will care for us on our journey to heaven both spiritually and in our temporal lives. May His will be done. ♦



When Worries Abound, God is Hope

Lillian Heilimo

AS TEENAGERS, we are slowly navigating the sometimes-stormy seas of this life. Difficult decisions can sweep us away in waves of hopelessness and doubt. We sometimes hear adults around us mention how youth was such a wonderful time for them. Maybe we feel that we should enjoy it more and just quit worrying.

Sure, youth is a special time; however, it is also a time where we must begin to make big life decisions. Some teens look at the unforeseeable future and shudder with fear of the unknown. We must begin to make decisions about careers, school, money and marriage, for example. These large decisions may cause us to doubt and lose hope.

When young people make decisions about their future careers, they have to consider both their interests in extensive study and how to finance their education. Canadian students often find that they must take out large student loans to finance their years of university education. For those like myself who want to be teachers, it might be com-

mon to take loans of ten thousand dollars a year to earn a degree and a teaching certification. Then the worry turns to how to pay it back. This entire process requires trust and so much hope for the future.

In the midst of doubts, it is important to remember that hope is found in God and the forgiveness of sins. The following Bible portion reminds us that as long as we have faith in God, He will help us make plans and navigate our decisions and future. “Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:30–34). ♦

CHILDRENS COLUMN



A friendly competition at grandpa's house. Theo and his grandpa enjoy a board game together.

PHOTO: JOANN HONKALA

I Want to Be Like My Grandpa

Theo Kumpula

I LOOK UP TO MY GRANDPA for many reasons. He is always there for me if I need something, and he is kind and generous. Sometimes when he goes to the store, he'll come back with a treat or some neat gadget and toss it in my lap.

If I am down, he comforts and consoles me and cheers me up. He puts others first and he stands up for what he believes in. He is a good example to others. I want to be like my grandpa.

My grandpa is always kind and loving no matter who he is speaking to. He gives advice when I need it and holds me accountable for what I do. I love that he brings humor into many situations.

My grandpa treasures his faith, and I can tell it is important to him. He is always at church and he frequently teaches Bible class lessons. I can tell that he wants to be a believer as much as anyone else.

My grandpa is a great example of honor, integrity and faith. Whenever he is around I feel safe, loved and welcome. ♦

In 2021 Doctrine and Life will feature translations of articles from previous SRK Yearbooks.

Future and Hope

Ilari Kinnunen

IT HAS TRADITIONALLY been thought that the world’s future is made better by children and youth. They will build society with knowledge and skills that were not available to previous generations. Are we now at some sort of turning point when an ordinary young person might say in all earnestness that the future is already ruined? Have we failed at cultivating and protecting the earth so miserably that today’s youth will become embittered toward the generations that came before them?

Previous generations’ decisions inevitably affect the lives of future generations. It’s an indisputable fact that humanity has made mistakes. Instead of giving up, however, it is a better option to take a moment to ponder together what might be worthwhile to do in this situation. Adults can support youth by joining them in creating a trusting outlook on life. Adults have life experience which helps put things in perspective. Youth are best encouraged by doing things together. An effort can and should be made to continue building the future.

For a young person, things may seem grimmer than they actually are. In the past too people have feared an unknown future. I recall my own time of youth, how hard it was at times to trust that I would find my own place in the world and that a path forward would open before me. However, all was well. In the army I learned one important thing: a situation is what it is, and on those terms one does what one can. I also remember from my time of youth that faith provided security and confidence that the heavenly Father would arrange things as was meant. The youth of today can trust in this as well.

A Happy Country without Children?

When Finland’s President Sauli Niinistö launched the Common Responsibility Campaign on February 2, 2020, he stated his position on the declining birth rate in Finland: “In the country that is evaluated to be the world’s happiest, it shouldn’t be so that uncertainty about the future causes young people to give up on starting a family.” The President’s statement is a good description of today’s situation for youth and young adults: the future of our affluent society is threatened if children are not born. On the other hand, no one wants to have children just because society needs them.

There are many reasons for not having children. Some want to seek self-fulfill-

ment in peace, advance in their careers and pursue their dreams. Economic realities may cause some to calculate the costs associated with having children. It has also been argued that not having a child is the best way to counteract climate change. There are many people whose circle of close human contacts includes few children, and this might make them doubt their own abilities to be a parent. Meanwhile, in the year 2015 it was estimated that in Finland there were 60,000 couples suffering from unintentional infertility.

A believing young person knows that getting married is likely to mean a future as a family with children, since believers for reasons of conscience do not want to prevent the birth of children. Commitment to marriage and a family may seem difficult nowadays. A life that is well planned and controlled appeals to believers as well. Many parents have a hard inward struggle over whether they feel able to accept more children.

Child-Friendly Atmosphere

Where would we be able to obtain strength and trust in the future for ourselves, our youth and our families? We would certainly have opportunities to transform the atmosphere around us in a way that young people could get married trusting in the future and be able to accept children if God sees fit to give children to them.

My wife’s immigrant students are often surprised when they find out we have five children. Amazed and delighted, they have stated that you are like us. Starting a family at a young age and having several children requires courage in modern Finnish culture to depart from the prevailing lifestyle. It requires good self-esteem to be different. But happiness is ultimately not dependent on striving for the same things as most other people.

Now and then I think of the fact that God has created all people. If this is so, doesn’t a believing person then represent the way of life that God desires? There is little we can do about the fact that the world is becoming more and more estranged from the will of God. As believers we can nonetheless turn our thoughts to see that humans are supposed to live life trusting in God.

In modern times it is good, on the one hand, that differing lifestyles are becoming more widely accepted. A believing family is ultimately just one part of a multi-faceted world. I am confident that as far as others are concerned, we can

continue to live according to our values in the future as well. If only the views that faith opens before us would remain clear to us. In the midst of this all we can say as the psalmist does: “It is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps. 73:28).

The Media Shapes Perceptions

The media is like a funnel that in essence pours bad news into our innermost being. The media performs the role that belongs to it of relaying information. I don’t believe media professionals are purposely trying to create despair in people. But that can still happen because we are incapable of taking in all the negative information. The media is also not unbiased. Individual journalists and entire media companies have their own objectives and ideals that they attempt to promote.

God’s written Word has remained the same through the centuries. How is it possible that its instruction and values can be relevant and appropriate in all times?

The media is not without cause called the fourth estate or power. It strongly affects public opinion and affects my thinking and yours in ways that are hard to recognize. In order not to be buffeted by the winds of the world and too easily influenced, we should have strong roots in God’s Word and in the congregation. Paul exhorted the Christians of his day, “Prove [meaning “test”] all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). The writer to the Hebrews also recognized the danger of going astray when he said that we must pay careful attention to that which we have heard so we do not drift away (Heb. 2:1).

God’s written Word has remained the same through the centuries. How is it possible that its instruction and values can be relevant and appropriate in all times? I think it is because it is not only the human-written word, but rather effected by the Holy Spirit. Its correct interpretation opens at different times in God’s congregation by the same Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20,21). As individual believers, we are supported by God’s care in the fellowship of the

congregation. This does not mean obeying human authorities but rather a desire to settle on, along with other believers, a way of life that is suitable to the Holy Spirit in this time.

On the basis of the values that stem from our faith, we can serve as a light and as salt in our society. In our places of work and study as well as in various positions of trust, a believer’s conduct serves as a reminder that it is possible yet today to attempt to live preserving faith and a good conscience. A believer, however, should not attempt to rise above others, because we all fall and we remain believers only by grace. The book of Jeremiah instructs, “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer. 29:7). A constructive and God-trusting outlook on life given by faith is the best way to look to the future. We can use our God-given gifts for the benefit of our communities.

The Security of a Child of God

Even believers from time to time can fear many things. We may fear on our own behalf or for others such things as serious illness, death or perhaps economic collapse. Nonetheless we can always recall that God knows all and guides our lives (Ps. 139). Our fears may come true sometimes, but in that case they are allowed by God. He has good will toward us even in trials: I have my own plans for you, says the Lord. My thoughts are of peace and not of evil: I will give you a future and hope (Jer. 29:11).

A believer, nonetheless, must fear sin (Matt. 10:28). Falling into sin removes peace from the heart and shakes one’s sense of security. If sin begins to rule one’s life, the person’s image of a bright future begins to crumble as well. To counter this, we have the gospel, which frees us from sin and restores peace to our hearts. A believer can live in peace and die peacefully. We cannot even fathom how great a gift the hope of heaven is. Amidst everyday life heaven often feels so far away. Yet that is precisely the reason we want to live as believers, despite hardships and the current prevailing trends. ♦

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Translation: M. Keranen



PHOTO: RAMONA LAULAINEN

All Saints’ Eve Services

Nicole Parks

ON THE COLD, SHADOWY EVENING of October 31 – All Saint’s Eve – the Alaskan congregation gathered in our small church building for fellowship and to listen to God’s Word.

As families and individuals trickled into the church, the noise level increased. Children sought out their friends and excitedly began to talk about the day’s events. I felt a warm wave of joy and comfort make its way into my heart. I marveled that on this frigid, dark night we were able to be together inside a cozy church building while the world bustled around us with trick-or-treating, Halloween parties and worldly activities. I felt safe among my fellow believers and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which seemed nearly tangible that night.

The idea of Halloween originated as a response by the church to the pagan celebration to commemorate the end of the harvest season and the start of a new year. The pagans believed there was a time between the end of the year and beginning of a new year when the spirits of those who had passed came back to earth. Later on, Catholics, who frowned upon pagan rituals, deemed November 1 as a day to honor saints and martyrs. October 31 then became All Saint’s Eve. There is a large disparity between a day set aside to honor those who passed away and the current emphasis on costumes and parties and frightening experiences.

David Anderson, who spoke at our services that night, touched on this disparity; what we might see in the world around us on Halloween contrasts with the reason we gather – to remember those believers that have reached their heavenly destination. As I listened to David’s sermon, I remembered dear loved ones that lived a testament of faith while on earth and have passed away to join the angels in heaven.

A portion of the text set aside for that day, Romans 5:1–2, states “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.” This text touches on how we are only justified by our faith. The saints who have gone before us did not achieve their heavenly merit by their own strength or works. The “grace wherein we stand” is the gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

We are grace beggars, just as elder believers in their final moments often exemplify. They want nothing more than to hear the gospel preached and to remind those gathered around them of the preciousness of faith. This meek, powerful testament has stayed with me, and reminds me how simple faith is. We just need to believe.

Though our service was ordinary, and didn’t include extra activities or candy, there was something special about just gathering together that evening. On All Saint’s Eve, we were simply happy to have the fellowship of our fellow believers and to be reassured with God’s Word an extra time that week.

We are living in very trying and unusual times. It is especially important to turn to God’s Word and each other for guidance and reassurance. Though the journey may feel long and tiring, I have hope that one day I will reach my destination along with those saints that have gone before me. ♦

On Weddings

Liisa Keranen

I HAVE SERVED AS ORGANIST at a dozen or so weddings in Minnesota since our move here a few years ago. From these experiences, I find that weddings here are somewhat different from weddings in Finland. One difference is the building or venue. In Finland, most people get married in the local state church, which often means a big space with a big pipe organ.

Based on conversations, many Americans seem to think that some things are more “fancy” in Finland and that there is more attention to detail. Well, I don’t know about that, but at least when it comes to wedding ceremonies, there’s a lot more going on here in North American weddings for the organist to follow than in Finland. Playing for a wedding in Finland consists at its simplest of one processional, a congregational song and a recessional. Three songs or organ pieces.

Most often it’s just the couple in Finland who walk together up to the altar, and in the relatively rare event they do have a best man and a maid of honor, there’s only one of each. Therefore, there’s usually no need to have a rehearsal beforehand with the musician. A simple meeting of the minister and couple is sufficient for the ceremony to go through in proper fashion.

Here in North America, it is a careful process to make the wedding ceremony run smoothly. It is essential that there’s a rehearsal on the previous day, where the ceremony is often run through twice just to make sure everything goes right. Before the wedding starts, there’s a beautiful ceremony of acknowledging the couple’s near and dear ones by ushering them to their benches in a certain order, each to certain, personally selected music.

I think it’s a beautiful tradition to have special music for the family, friends, godparents, minister, mothers, and then ultimately for the bride to come in. Sometimes it’s a bit hectic at the organist’s bench switching music on the fly and hoping the music matches the special friend, the specific family member and so on. Also, the musical tapestry of the special event can become fragmented if the processional involves many musical shifts and if there’s only time to play a snippet of each designated piece or melody. At some weddings, a longer musical piece has accompanied the seating of multiple parties and this has provided a beautiful and calm ceremony.

There are lots of classical pieces that work well for these purposes in addition to pieces from *Songs and Hymns of Zion*. Like many other organists, I have heard requests for music that sounds a lot like classical music but is what I would call “quasi-classical”. Some requests were for music from movies and some for piano pieces that fall into the category of easy-listening music. When we think of a wedding, it is a ceremony of uniting two people for the rest of their lives in holy matrimony; therefore it seems right that the music would match the solemn tone of the endeavor. Here is where the organist’s musical background can guide a couple towards choosing music that suits their tastes and is appropriate to the occasion.

In these American weddings there’s typically singing that involves both vocalists and the congregation. I’ve accompanied solos and duets at these events, and I really appreciate the fact that music is so highly valued at the wedding ceremony. It is also touching when the congregation stays in the sanctuary singing songs of Zion, as a prayer for the newly married couple, while the couple is starting the receiving line with a private moment with their nearest and dearest.

The LLC Music Committee has gotten requests to collect music materials beyond our hymnal that are often used at weddings. Therefore, the Committee decided to launch a project to create a book of songs and music that are fitting for weddings. Many people have composed a song for their loved one’s occasion or written words to an existing melody. If you have such songs or poems in your desk drawer, freely send them to us for the Committee to review! ♦

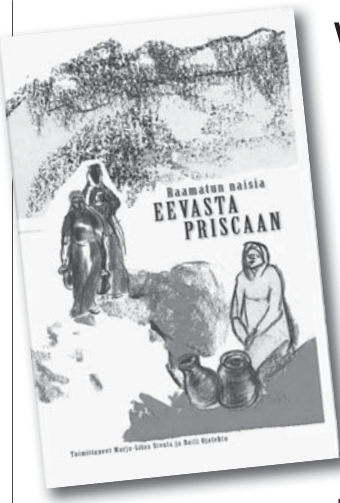
What do you hope
2021 will bring?

- > On my journey into the new year, I hope the fog will lift. The fog through which we cannot see very far or very clearly. Nevertheless, God has the future in His hands. We can trust in His guidance and care. His all-knowing gaze sees what is best for us. His plans are perfect, and He guides our lives according to His will. – M.L.
- > We haven't had a new baby in a long time, and it would mean so much were God to grant us another infant to have and to hold. – Empty arms
- > I pray for God's protection, that I can remain in the love and grace of God. I pray that God would help and protect my family. I hope that my home congregation would stay united in faith and hope. May God also give wisdom and the fear of God to our government to do their work in a way that would please God, giver of all good gifts. – Jouko Haapsaari
- > I hope 2021 will bring the strength and the will to accept that which I or we collectively cannot change. God knows what our future will hold. I can be content that, yet for this moment, I am given grace to believe. – Brian
- > I am hopeful that in the new year we will be able to have services where people can fill the benches and singing can fill the church. Nonetheless, in whatever kind of services we are allowed to hold, God's Word can still be preached, and that is the main thing. – Hopeful

How do you spend
your Sundays?

To answer, send an email message
to fromthereader@lchurch.org

You may sign your message with your given name (first name or first and last names) or with a pseudonym or pen name. We reserve the right to select which answers we publish. We may edit spelling and grammar in responses. If necessary, we may also edit for brevity and clarity. Submit your answers by February 1, 2021. Look for the answers to this question in the March *Voice of Zion*!



Women in the Bible

THE BIBLE MENTIONS nearly three thousand people. Of these, 156 are women mentioned by name. Some are well known; some have a more minor role. In addition, many women are mentioned as wives, sisters, mothers, widows or servants. These women are often described as resourceful, active and tenacious women. In the Bible, there are instances where God used a woman to help resolve difficult situations – for these instrumental roles He chose all kinds of people, from the mighty and strong to the lowly and weak and insignificant.

In SRK's book *Raamatun naisia Eevasta Priscaan* [Women of the Bible from Eve to Priscilla], believing Finnish authors write about women in the Bible. The book is a cross-section of how women have acted as intermediaries in God's salvation plan.

The writings give us a broader picture of familiar women and tell about some Bible characters that may be unknown to us.

These biblical characters are described with their joys and sorrows, strengths and weaknesses and with their own individual personalities. Each woman is described based on biblical texts, without interpretation. The authors have also drawn on historical research and data to provide information about the times in which the women lived.

The following writing is excerpted from the book *Raamatun naisia Eevasta Priscaan* [Women of the Bible from Eve to Priscilla], Ed. Marja-Liisa Sivula and Raili Ojalehto (SRK, 2011). In 2021, our Bilingual feature will consist of excerpts from this book with the goal of eventually publishing a translation of the entire book. The stories of these Biblical women encourage us to persevere in life and faith and to continue in our own personal Bible study, where we find others who, like us, are humans in need of God's salvation.

The Creation of Eve

Keijo Nissilä

IT WAS NOT GOOD for Adam to be alone. The Lord God said: "I will make him a companion who can also be a helpmate." The Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and then took a rib from Adam's side. God created from this rib a woman and brought her to the man. Adam cried in wonder: "This is it! This is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Adam called the woman Eve, *Havah* in Hebrew. The name derives from the word *chayah*, which means "live." Thus, the name Eve means "mother of all who live" or "mother of the living."

God created Eve from the rib of her husband Adam. This signifies the union of the essence of man and woman. Adam stated: "She shall be called woman: she is derived of the man." The original text in the Hebrew language presents male and female as connected beings: in Hebrew, man is *ish*; and woman is *ishah*.

Being taken from the rib bone indicates being created on the same level. Man and woman are created equal. This equal companionship removed the man's loneliness. God's

promised helpmate, one that is suitable, is another human at his side. The original text states that the woman is as a complement to the man.

Being created from the ribcage is indicative of coming from the heart. Thus, the created man and woman are connected by mutual love. It is due to the connection between the natures of Adam and Eve that they inherently felt attraction to each other. The ultimate fulfillment of this love was their marriage, which God instituted when He blessed Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Marriage serves God's continual creation plan. Adam joined his wife Eve. Eve became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. Eve stated: "By the help of the Lord, I have received a son." Later, Eve bore a brother for Cain, named Abel. After Abel's death they had yet another son, whom Eve named Seth. This is how Eve became the matriarch of all humankind. ♦

Translation: Sandra Pylvainen

Eevan luominen

Keijo Nissilä

AADAMIN EI OLLUT HYVÄ olla yksin. Herra Jumala sanoi: "Minä teen hänelle kumppanin, joka sopii hänen avukseen." Herra Jumala vaivutti miehen syvään uneen ja otti yhden hänen kylkiluistaan. Hän loi tästä kylkiluusta naisen ja toi hänet miehen luo. Mies huudahti ihastuneena: "Tämä se on! Tämä on luo minun luustani ja liha minun lihastani!" Aadam kutsui vaimoaan nimellä Eeva, hepreaksi *Hawwa*. Nimi johtuu sanasta *haja*, joka merkitsee 'elää'. Eeva-nimen merkitys on siis 'kaikkien elävien äiti' tai 'kaiken elävän äiti'.

Jumala loi Eevan hänen miehensä Aadamin kylkiluusta. Tämä merkitsee miehen ja naisen olemuksen yhteyttä. Aadam lausui: "Naiseksi häntä sanottakoon: miehestä hänet on otettu." Alkutekstin hepreankieliset sanat kuvaavat miehen ja naisen olemuksellista yhteyttä: mies on hepreaksi *is*, ja nainen *issa*.

Kylkiluusta otettu on luotu samalta tasolta. Mies ja nainen ovat keskenään tasa-arvoiset. Tasa-arvoinen

kumppanuus poisti miehen yksinäisyyden. Jumalan lupaama apu, joka on hänelle sopiva, on toinen ihminen hänen rinnallaan. Alkutekstin mukaan nainen on kuin "häntä vastapäätä".

Kylkiluusta luotu on lähtöisin sydämen kohdalta. Näin luotua miestä ja naista yhdistää keskinäinen rakkaus. Aadamin ja Eevan olemuksen yhteydestä johtui, että he tunsivat luonnostaan vetovoimaa toisiinsa. Tämän rakkauden korkein toteutumisen muoto oli heidän avioliittonsa, jonka Jumala asetti, kun hän siunasi Aadamin ja Eevan: "Olkaa hedelmälliset, lisääntykää ja täyttäkää maa ja ottakaa se valtaanne. Vallitkaa meren kaloja, taivaan lintuja ja kaikkea, mikä maan päällä elää ja liikkuu."

Avioliitto palvelee Jumalan jatkuvaa luomista. Aadam yhtyi vaimonsa Eevaan. Eeva tuli raskaaksi ja synnytti Kainin. Eeva sanoi: "Minä olen Herran avulla saanut poikalapsen." Myöhemmin Eeva synnytti Kainille veljen, Abelin. Abelin kuoltua heille syntyi vielä poika, jolle Eeva antoi nimen Set. Eevasta tuli ihmissuvun kantaäiti. ♦



Welcome to 2021 LLC Summer Services!

JULY 1–5
Marquette,
Michigan

FOLLOW US
on Facebook
or Instagram!

Posts containing
Summer Services
information and
updates will also
appear on LLC's
Facebook and
Instagram feeds.

Join us there!

THE LAESTADIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH (LLC) Summer Services will be held in Marquette, Michigan, Thursday, July 1 through Sunday, July 5, 2021. All services, activities and meals will take place at the Superior Dome on the campus of Northern Michigan University. Hosts for the services are the Eastern Area congregations.

The motto for the services is taken from Revelations 2:10: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." On behalf of the 2020 Summer Service Planning Committee, I extend a warm welcome to all!

Peter Hill, Planning Committee Chairman

Lodging

It is strongly recommended that you make your lodging reservations for the 2021 LLC Summer Services as soon as possible. Hotels and campgrounds in Marquette County are very busy during the summer season and are often booked months in advance. There are many rentals available on accommodation rental sites, e.g. Airbnb and VRBO. Note that these also book quickly.

At this time, we do not have any lodging available in homes. Dorm lodging may be available at Northern Michigan University, as well as limited, on-site RV parking. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

For any lodging questions, contact Janet Wisuri (call or text 906-204-0096 or email janetwisuri+ss2021@gmail.com).

Food Service

Meals and concessions will be provided and served by the NMU Catering staff in accordance with university policy. The menu and meal ticket sales will be announced at a later date. Contact person: Aleta Honkala (906-250-8937; rbirchhl@aol.com).

Transportation

The service site is eighteen miles from the KI Sawyer airport. For any transportation needs or questions, contact Kevin Kuopus (906-458-2276; kevin.m.kuopus@gmail.com).

Hotels

America's Best Value Inn

906-249-1712
5 miles from service site

Birchmont Motel

877-458-7805; 906-228-7538
birchmontmotel.com
4.3 miles from service site

Brentwood Motor Inn

800-999-7055; 906-228-7494
budgethost.com
3 miles from service site.
Dogs allowed \$10 per night.

Cedar Motor Inn

888-551-7378; 906-228-2280
cedarmotorinn.com
3.5 miles from service site

Comfort Suites

(906) 228-0028
4 miles from service site

Country Inn & Suites

906-225-1300
countryinns.com
3.5 miles from service site

Days Inn by Wyndham

(906) 225-1393
4 miles from service site

Econo Lodge Lakeside

906-225-1305
5 miles from service site

Holiday Inn Marquette

906-225-1351
3 miles from service site

Imperial Motel

800-424-9514
906-228-7430
imperialmotel.com
4 miles from service site

Landmark Inn

906-228-2580
thelandmarkinn.com
1 mile from service site

Quality Inn

888-276-9214
906-228-8100
2 miles from service site

Ramada Inn

906-228-6000
1 mile from service site

Value Host Motor Inn

800-929-5996; 906-225-5000
valuehostmotorinn.com
1.5 miles from service site

Hotels/Motels – Ishpeming

There are additional hotels or motels in Ishpeming, Michigan, twenty miles or less to the service site:

Jasper Ridge Inn

906-485-2378

Magnuson Hotel Country Inn

906-485-6345

Triangle Motel

888-761-1850

Wonderland Motel

906-485-1044

Camping

Marquette Tourist Park

906-225-0460
marquettetemi.gov
Marquette, MI
1 mile from service site
Rustic, electric, and full hookup sites

Gitchee Gumee RV Park/ Campground

(906) 249-9102
gitcheegumeePark.com
Marquette, MI
10 miles from service site
Tent, water/electric, full hookup sites

Van Riper State Park

(800) 447-2757
midnrreservations.com
Champion, MI
30 miles from service site

Rippling River Resort

906-273-2259
ripplingriverresort.com
Marquette, MI
4.4 miles from service site
Rustic, electric, full hookup sites; rustic and luxury cabins

Country Village RV Park & Vacation Homes

906-485-2378
Ishpeming, MI
20 minutes from service site
RV sites, rustic cabins, vacation homes

Michigamme Shores Campground/Resort

906-339-2116
Michigamme, MI
35 miles from service site

UPCOMING LLC MISSION TRIPS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LLC has suspended foreign mission trips. We continue to monitor the situation and will reinstate these activities as it becomes possible. We remember in prayer our brothers and sisters in foreign mission fields.

REMEMBER:

Service Men and Women in Prayer and with Mail

Service personnel, or their families may submit the names and addresses of active duty members of the armed services to appear in this space. Consider a gift subscription to the *Voice of Zion* or recorded sermons for your loved one who is in the service.

Note: Mail to all service personnel uses regular U.S. postage rates.

- Mark & Angela Hoikka
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San Antonio, TX 78229-4905
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mhoikka@hotmail.com
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PHOTO: ANNETTE JOHNSON

SERVICE SCHEDULES

<div><div>CANADA</div><div>ALBERTA</div><div><div>Lethbridge Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>Chairman: Allen Pirness 403-894-0515 pirness@hotmail.com Secretary: Kris Ylioja 403-308-6170 kylioja@hotmail.com</div><div><div>Sept-May</div><div>Sunday school 10:00 am Sunday service 11:00 am 1st Sunday communion 3rd Sunday evening service 7:00 pm Song services 1st Friday of the month Bible class Friday 7:30 pm</div><div>June-Aug</div><div>Sunday service 11:00 am</div></div></div></div> <div><div>ONTARIO</div><div><div>Toronto Laestadian Lutheran Congregation</div><div>5579 Hwy 27, Cookstown, ON Mailing address: PO Box 1035 Cookstown, ON, Canada L0L 1L0</div><div><div></div><div>Sunday school (Labour Day–Mother’s Day) 12:00 pm Sunday service (Labour Day–end of June) 1:00 pm Sunday service (July–Labour Day) 6:00 pm Communion service 1st Sunday of month Day Circle, Children’s Bible class, and song services Friday (Labour Day–Mother’s Day) 7:00 pm</div><div>Chairman: 416-688-5254 Secretary: 905-936-6359 Church: 705-458-9568 (during services)</div></div></div><div><div>SASKATCHEWAN</div><div><div>Dunblane Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>Box 160, Macrorie, SK Canada S0L 2E0 Phone & fax: 306-243-4837 Chairman: 306-243-4407 Secretary: 306-243-4836</div><div><div></div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:45 am Sunday services 11:00 am 1st Sunday 7:00 pm Communion service 1st Sunday Bible class (2nd, 3rd & 4th Friday) 7:30 pm Song services (1st Friday) 7:30 pm Youth Bible class (4th Sunday alt w/Outlook) 7:00 pm</div><div>No Bible class or song services June, July and Aug.</div></div></div><div><div>Outlook Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>400 McKenzie St N Outlook, SK Canada S0L 2N0 Phone: 306-867-8950 Chairman: 306-867-7530 Secretary: 306-867-9632 secretary.OLLC@gmail.com www.outlookllchurch.org</div><div><div></div><div><div>Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. —Matt. 11:28</div><div>Welcome to our services!</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:45 am Sunday service (June–Aug) 10:00 am Sunday service (Sept–May) 11:00 am Communion 1st Sunday Sunday evening service (1st & 3rd Sunday) 6:30 pm Bible class (Friday) 7:00 pm Song services (1st Friday) 7:00 pm Youth Bible class (4th Sunday) 6:30 pm</div><div>No Bible class or song services June, July and Aug.</div></div></div></div><div><div>Saskatoon Laestadian LUTHERAN CHURCH</div><div>Chairman: 306-343-1116 saskatoonllc.org</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–Apr) 12:30 pm Sunday service (Communion 1st Sunday) (Sept–Apr) 1:30 pm Sunday service (Communion 1st Sunday) (May–Aug) 12:30 pm Bible class / Song services – Friday (Sept–Apr) 7:00 pm</div></div></div></div>	<div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Flagstaff</div><div>Meeting place: Sturgeon Cromer Elementary School 7150 Silver Saddle Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86004 llcflagstaff.org</div><div>Sunday school 9:15 am Sunday service 10:30 am</div><div>For visiting minister and communion service details, see online calendar. Chairman: 612-741-7615 Secretary: 602-885-3105</div></div> <div><div>Phoenix Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>32424 N 43rd St, Cave Creek, AZ 85331 pllchurch.org information@pllchurch.org Chairman: 602-396-6929 Secretary: 480-213-2201</div><div>Service Schedule</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:15 am Sunday service 10:30 am & 7:00 pm (1st Sunday Communion, no evening service) Wednesday: Bible study 7:00 pm 1st Wednesday: Song services 7:00 pm Sunday service summer schedule 10:00 am</div></div> <div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Prescott Valley</div><div>3120 Mountain View PO Box 25517 Prescott Valley, AZ 86312</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:15 am Sunday service (Communion–1st Sunday) 10:30 am Wednesday–Bible class (except July) 7:00 pm</div><div>Church: 928-775-5030 Chairman: 928-445-0407 Secretary: 928-533-3347</div></div> <div><div>COLORADO</div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of the Roaring Fork Valley</div><div>1859 N 1st St PO Box 681 Silt, CO 81652 Chairman: 970-618-7752 www.llcrfv.org</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:15 am Sunday services (1st Sunday Communion) 10:30 am 2nd & 4th Sunday evening services 6:30 pm Wednesday: Bible class, Youth Bible class, Day Circle, Home and Family, or song services 7:00 pm</div></div></div> <div><div>FLORIDA</div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Florida</div><div>(Affiliated LLC Congregation) Contact: Secretary – Russell Roiko 612-723-1422 or Treasurer – Vesa Paukkeri 954-294-6567</div><div>Service Schedule (English & Finnish)</div><div><div>Apr–Nov</div><div>At homes Contact above</div><div>Dec–Mar</div><div>Sunday–2:00 pm St. Andrews Lutheran Church 928 South E St, Lake Worth</div></div></div></div> <div><div>ILLINOIS</div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Illinois</div><div>Chairman: 847-543-4121 Secretary: 847-543-4121</div><div>Sept–May Sunday school 10:00 am Sunday services 10:45 am</div><div>June–Aug Sunday services 10:00 am</div><div>Communion service 1st Sunday of month Bible class last Sunday of month</div></div></div> <div><div>MICHIGAN</div><div><div><div><div></div><div>290 Fairground, Plymouth, MI 48170 734-451-0500 www.dlchurch.org</div></div><div>Chairman: Briar Siljander 248-978-2982 bsiljander@gmail.com Secretary: Julie Honkala 248-224-1399 juliehonkala@yahoo.com</div><div>SEPT–MAY: Sunday services 11:00 am (Communion on 1st Sunday) Sunday school 9:45 am Bible class 7:00 pm on 1st & 3rd Wednesday Song services 7:00 pm on 1st Wednesday alternating with Bible class. Youth Bible class 7:00 pm on 3rd Wednesday Day Circle 10:30 am on 1st Saturday</div></div></div><div><div>Ishpeming Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>567 Washington St, Ishpeming, MI 49849 906-485-1791</div><div>Sunday (Sept–May) Sunday school 9:45 am Worship service 11:00 am 6:30 pm</div><div>Sunday (June–Aug) Worship service 11:00 am 7:00 pm</div><div>Communion service – First Sunday No evening service – Last Sunday</div><div>Wednesday (Sept–Apr) Bible class 7:00 pm</div><div>Song service or discussion – First Wednesday</div></div><div><div>Pelkie Laestadian Lutheran Congregation</div><div>Church address: 15439 Pelkie Rd, Pelkie, MI 49958 906-353-7531 Mailing address: 22399 Broemer Rd, Chassel, MI 49916 Chairman: Albert Hongisto 906-482-0878 Secretary: Roy Pikkarainen 906-482-2166 Pastor: James Frantti 906-483-0712</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:45 am Sundays: Worship service 11:00 am 1st Sunday: Communion service 11:00 am 2nd Wednesday: Bible study 6:30 pm</div></div></div>
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SERVICE SCHEDULES

<div>MINNESOTA</div> <div><div><div><div>Brainerd Laestadian Lutheran Church & Manor</div><div>1501 S 8th St, Brainerd, MN 218-829-5745</div><div>Chairman: 218-828-0536 Secretary: 218-829-8055</div></div></div><div>Welcome to our services!</div><div>Sunday service..... 10:30 am 1st Sunday: Communion service Wednesday evenings: Online devotion services..... 7:00 pm Sunday school (held in homes during school year)</div></div>	
<div><div><div>Cokato Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>16144-20th St SW, Cokato, MN 55321 320-286-2413</div></div><div></div><div>Sunday school (during school year) 9:15 am 1st Sunday: Communion service 10:30 am 2nd Sunday: Services..... 10:30 am Discussion 7:00 pm 3rd & 4th Sundays:Services 10:30 am Services..... 7:00 pm 1st Wednesday: Song services 7:00 pm 2nd, 3rd & 4th Wednesday: Bible class 7:00 pm Chairman: 612-490-4103 Secretary: 763-237-4663</div></div>	
<div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Elk River</div><div>8595 201st Ave NW, Nowthen, MN 55330 Mailing Address: 551 Marcia Dr, Big Lake, MN 55309 Chairman: Adrian Pirness 763-360-0820 Secretary: Becky Randall 763-274-1454</div></div><div>Welcome to our services!</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May)..... 9:15 am Sunday morning service 10:30 am Sunday evening service* 6:30 pm Wednesday activity* 7:00 pm *No evening service on the 5th Sunday; **The 1st Wednesday of the month is either home services or song services.</div></div>	
<div><div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Menahga</div><div>25 Juniper Ave NW, Menahga, MN 56464 218-564-4064 www.llcmenahga.org</div><div>Chairman: 218-538-6583 Pastor: 218-564-4702</div></div></div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May)..... 9:15 am Sunday services 10:30 am 1st Sunday communion (10:30 am & 6:00 pm) Wednesday Bible class, song services, or home services 7:00 pm</div></div>	
<div><div><div><div>Minneapolis Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>13030 47th Ave N, Plymouth, MN 55442 763-553-1601 www.mllchurch.org</div><div>general@mllchurch.org</div></div></div><div>Welcome to our services!</div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May)..... 9:15 am Sunday services 10:30 am Sunday evening services 6:30 pm 1st Sunday communion (10:30 am & 6:30 pm) Wednesday evening 7:00 pm Bible class, song services, or home services (Sept–May) Services (June–Aug) All Sunday morning sermons and special services are webcast live from our website: www.mllchurch.org</div></div>	
<div><div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Monticello</div><div>1860 County Rd 39 NE, Monticello, MN 55362 Chairman: 763-286-3097 Secretary: 612-298-5095 www.llcmonticello.org</div></div></div><div>Sunday School (Sept–May)..... 9:15 am Services (1st Sunday Communion)..... 10:30 am 2nd and 4th Sunday: Services..... 6:30 pm Wednesday–Bible Class (except 1st Wednesday)..... 7:00 pm Song services on 1st Wednesday* 7:00 pm *Home & Family Discussion Evening–Oct, Dec, Feb, and April</div></div>	
<div><div><div>Wolf Lake Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>Wolf Lake, MN 218-538-6708 www.wlllchurch.org</div></div><div>Sunday school 9:45 am Sunday worship 11:00 am Communion 1st Sunday each month 11:00 am Friday – Bible class..... 7:00 pm Communion 1st Sunday even numbered months all year 6:00 pm 2nd Sunday G.P.A. Nursing Home service 2:00 pm</div></div>	
<div><div><div>Rockford Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>Church address: 741 Ibarra Ave NE, Buffalo, MN Church: 763-497-8211</div></div><div>Sunday morning services 10:30 am Communion services on 1st Sunday..... 10:30 am Sunday school (Sept–May)..... 9:15 am 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sunday evening services with a Finnish sermon on the 1st Sunday..... 6:30 pm 4th Sunday youth discussion..... 6:30 pm Bible class on Wednesdays (except 1st Wednesday) 7:00 pm Song services on 1st Wednesday* 7:00 pm *Home services in Oct, Dec, Feb, Apr Pastor: Jouko Haapsaari 763-291-5818 jhaapsaari@rllchurch.org Chairman: Jeremy Glynn 763-710-0266 Secretary: Jeff Hanson 763-568-2645</div></div>	
<div>MONTANA</div> <div><div><div>Flathead Valley Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>Meeting Place: East Side Grange - 27 Creston Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901 Chairman: 406-309-4388 Secretary: 406-314-2871</div></div><div>Sunday service..... 10:30 am Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:15 am 1st and 3rd Wednesday: Services..... 7:00 pm 2nd and 4th Wednesday: Bible class 7:00 pm 5th Wednesday: Song services..... 7:00 pm 3rd Friday: Home services in Oct, Dec, Feb, Apr 7:00 pm</div><div>For visiting minister and communion service details, see online calendar at fullchurch.org</div></div>	
<div>NORTH DAKOTA</div> <div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Williston</div><div>Meeting place: Zahl Community Center, 3rd Street (west end of), Zahl, ND 58856</div></div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:45 am Sunday service..... 11:00 am Visiting Minister & Communion service: 1st Sunday of every month Chairman: 602-908-9982 Secretary: 218-255-1872</div></div>	
<div>WASHINGTON</div> <div><div><div>Longview Laestadian Lutheran Congregation</div><div>PO Box 2795 Longview, WA 98632-9635 360-425-7410</div></div><div><div>School Year</div><div>Sunday school 9:15 am 1st Sunday: Communion service 10:30 am & 1:30 pm Youth discussion 6:00 pm 2nd, 3rd & 4th Sundays: Services 10:30 am & 6:00 pm 5th Sunday: Services 6:00 pm Wednesday: Bible Class 7:00 pm</div><div>Summer</div><div>1st Sunday: Communion service 10:30 am & 1:30 pm Youth discussion 7:00 pm 2nd, 3rd & 4th Sundays: Services 10:30 am & 7:00 pm 5th Sunday: Services 7:00 pm Wednesday: Services..... 7:00 pm Website: llc-longview.org (Sunday 10:30 am service webcast)</div></div></div>	
<div><div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of the North Sound</div><div>Service Location: Highland Elementary 3220 113th Ave NE, Lake Stevens, WA 98258 Chairman: Paul Jacobson 425-280-4240 website: llcns.org</div></div></div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May)..... 9:15 am Sunday morning service 10:30 am Wednesday Bible class (last Wednesday song services) 7:00 pm (school year) 2nd Sunday/month service or discussion..... 6:00 pm</div></div>	
<div><div><div><div>Seattle Laestadian Lutheran Church</div><div>22420 - 102nd Ave SE Woodinville, WA 98072 www.seallc.org</div></div></div><div>Mailing address: PO Box 981, Monroe, WA 98272-4907</div><div>Sunday school (during school year) 9:15 am 1st Sunday: Communion service 10:30 am & 1:30 pm 2nd Sunday: Services 10:30 am & 7:00 pm 3rd Sunday: Services 10:30 am 4th Sunday: Services 10:30 am Youth discussion 7:00 pm 5th Sunday: Services 10:30 am & 7:00 pm Wednesday: Bible class 7:00 pm Church: 360-668-7116 Chairman: 360-668-6382</div></div>	
<div><div><div>Laestadian Lutheran Church of Spokane</div><div>Address: 35213 N Dalton Rd Church: 509-276-7635 Mailing: PO Box 1896, Deer Park, WA 99006 www.llc-spokane.org Chairman: 509-280-9696 Secretary: 509-276-7509</div></div><div>Sunday school (Sept–May): 9:15 am 1st Sunday: Communion service 10:30 am Service 1:00 pm 2nd Sunday: Service..... 10:30 am & 6:30 pm 3rd, 4th Sunday: Service 10:30 am 1st Wednesday: Song service 7:00 pm 2nd, 4th Wednesday: Bible class..... 7:00 pm</div></div>	

Welcome to Monticello Winter Services!

February 5–7, 2021

Due to COVID-19 guidelines, physical attendance may be limited. Check our website www.llcmchurch.org for updates as the date nears.

For additional information, please contact Brandon Jurmu (612-772-8599).

THE VOICE OF ZION

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES (New rates effective January 1, 2020)

Voice of Zion & Christmas in Zion:
North America Print Edition, \$54/year
International Print Edition, \$80/year
Shepherd’s Voice: North America Print Edition, \$31/year
International Print Edition, \$50/year

The current issue of the *Voice of Zion* and *Shepherd’s Voice* may be purchased as a PDF download under eBooks for \$5.00/each.
To order and renew subscriptions, go to the “Subscriptions” tab on the LLC’s online store, www.llchurch.org.
Address Changes: Go to www.llchurch.org. Under Publications tab complete “Change of Address” form. Also update your address in your online store account to ensure continued delivery.
Note to U.S. residents: Subscriptions are sent bulk mail and are not forwarded. Submit change of address information as soon as possible.
For subscription assistance, contact Kathy Laho at klaho@llchurch.org or 763-479-2422.

ADVERTISING RATES
Small Ad (3" x 2" or less): \$15.00/month
Large Ad (3" x 2" or more): \$25.00/month
Note: minimum 15 euro charge for advertising invoices sent to Europe.
Announcements:
Birth, engagement, wedding and card of thanks: \$17.00
Death: \$35.00
Submit information on the forms at www.llchurch.org > About > LLC Organization > Publications > *Voice of Zion* Announcements.
Contact Annette Johnson at ajohnson@llchurch.org with inquiries.
Submit death announcements and inquiries to Kathy Laho at klaho@llchurch.org
Ads must be submitted by the 1st of the month preceding the month of publication.

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Visit the LLC website at: www.llchurch.org

Site includes:
- Live sermons
- News and notes
- Publications information
- Online store
- Articles and presentations
- Camp activities enrollment

Executive Director:
Eric Jurmu
cell: 763-402-3695
ejurmu@llchurch.org

The Best Words in the Best Order

– and God’s Blessing

LLC Publications Online Workshop Fall 2020

Matthew Keranen, Sandra Pylvainen and Anne Servin

THE FIRST LLC PUBLICATIONS Online Workshop was held on October 31, 2020, via the Zoom communication platform. Participants from across the continent gathered in an online space to learn and be encouraged in prose, poetry and photojournalism both for their personal development and for the future of LLC publications. LLC Publications staff view the expansion of communications capacity as important to mission work both here on the American continent and to mission work in Africa and South America. To

Session I: Prose

Matt Keranen began his lesson by reviewing some good writing axioms for prose of any genre. Significantly, he highlighted the need for fresh language and avoiding tropes that first come to mind. Prose is writing that tends to follow natural patterns of everyday speech (as opposed to rigid, predetermined structure) for the purpose of expressing oneself, educating, entertaining or providing information or instructions. Then, he presented a unique short fiction form – the Japanese *Haibun* – as his structural framework for developing a tight descriptive prose piece. The genre may include one or a few descriptive paragraphs, then ends in a haiku, the 5-7-5 syllable poem form. This is Matt Keranen’s *Haibun*, read as a model:

The hands, no longer mobile, lay on the bedcover, under which the rest of him is also still. The tired eyes follow me as I gather the albums from the shelf in the corner and carry them to the bedside table. I move pill bottles aside, a drinking glass and a blood pressure cuff. I switch on the lamp and open the shades. Outside the summer day shines brightly, grass waving in the sun on the river bank. A boat floats by, the girl rowing it throws her head back in laughter. I lift an album and open it, nestle it between his still arms. His fishing boat in the photograph is also still, frozen in time fifty years later. The steelhead, the salmon, caught in the net, spill over the hull to the slick boat floor gleaming in the flash of the camera. That boat moved and it moves now, in our minds. Lived life flows, a lively stream in grandpa’s eyes.

*His strong hands pulled nets
Lifting, wrestling writhing fish
Slippery livelihood.*

Writers tried the form in a ten-minute “storm,” then shared in breakout groups. Results were rich. Here is an example written by Allen Pirness:

The determined, monotonous purr of a John Deere diesel engine is the same whether pulling a plow or leaving the bay out to sea in the pre-dawn light. The warm soft sea air feels much better than the chilly, dry air of the farm. The prospect of landing a sporting fish is much more appealing than considering how to till the field most efficiently. The open galley door conveys the welcoming smell of bacon and coffee versus the tractor cab waft of old spilled coffee and grease. This excites my appetite to make yet another stimulating contrast to the differences vacation brings when work is left behind. The hurried, half-asleep routine of the captain and crew reminds me that this is their mundane. They shiver in the breezy chill as we get up to speed on the open glassy water of the calm morning sea. The hooks are baited, the captain glides to a stop at a promising patch of seaweed floating on the endless shimmer of sunrise on the water.

*Fishing lines are cast.
An instant strike on the bait.
The fight has begun.*

that end, the online workshop was conceived during the era of COVID-19 restrictions. LLC workshop organizers found that they were unable to convene at Stony Lake Camp as planned, so in place of the in-person workshop, an online workshop plan emerged. Over thirty participants from across the United States and Canada met for four hours, an hour for each subject session, with instructors Matt Keranen, Sandra Pylvainen and Anne Servin. Presentations included mini-lessons, panelist commentary from across the continent, writing activities and small group discussions. While the foundational elements of each subject area comprised much of each lesson, the instructional plans developed with the central idea of encouraging current and future contributors to LLC publications – the *Voice of Zion*, *Shepherd’s Voice*, *Christmas in Zion* and *Easter Messenger*.

Session II: Poetry

The poetry session focused on freeverse poetry, its origins and some elements typical to this poetic type. Freeverse poetry is written by contemporary poets here and in Europe, also among believers who write poetry. While we continue to write and enjoy the rhyming and particular rhythms found throughout the long history of poetic types (such as epic poetry of Homer or *The Kalevala*), we note that contemporary poetry has shifted from tight forms to more open styles. Around the turn of the 20th century, as society progressed further into the Industrial Age, art forms shifted to modernism. Poets began working with imagistic poetry without adherence to a prescribed rhyme and rhythm. In this freeverse style, rhythms felt increasingly conversational. Sound devices shifted to subtle repetitions and the poetic focus moved to supporting the message in the image. After reviewing elements common to imagistic poetry, the poetry session examined poetic examples from Teuvo Aho, illustrating a freeverse, imagistic form. Panelists Peggy Glynn, Krista Simonson, Karl Haapala and Aaron Wuollet commented on their personal poetry writing practices: *Why do I write poetry? Where do poems hide? How do I begin? How do I revise?* Panelists’ answers were poems in themselves – so often, as poets discuss their craft, they play with images. Aaron Wuollet, in his remark, supported the poet’s goal: he likened the revision of a poem to a sculptor cutting away stone to reveal the essence of the image, exposing some truth about human existence.

For the freewrite activity, writers chose one of two topics, grief or Christmas. Products of the freewrite reflect the study of imagery in freeverse form. Writers who chose to write about grief saw the topic through personal reflection:

Emptied parents gaze through
arranged flowers covering freshly
disturbed mounds
dry eyes, all tears cried out
twittering birds
gaily flit above silent headstones
translating sorrow to angels’ songs

Lisa Wuollet

It’s been two years
but sometimes I stop in my step
and recall
the cardamom smell of your kitchen
and your soft wrinkled hand
with stubby fingernails serving pulla
spread with the butter from the
Blue Bonnet tub on the counter
and the rounded wooden knife that
fits perfectly in my hand

Keilah Johnson

Other poets wrote about Christmas during the 15-minute freewrite, drawing perhaps from past reflections or memories:

The walk is crisp,
a smell of snow in the air.
A bus scurries by,
studs claw the moist road.
Doors open to a muted hush,
warm light fills the sanctuary.
The story of Christmas is told.

Karl Haapala

Under the Father’s Table

This poor sheep dog
Crawls under the grace table
And finds Christmas table crumbs.

Father’s gentle hand
Reaches down to caress
Little boy slips me a prized morsel.

Oh....how good it feels here
Safe and secure
Under the Father’s table.

Jim Moll

These artifacts provide a glance of what transpired over the hours of workshopping. Follow-up comments on the workshop ranged from “not enough time in the break-out rooms” to “how can we form online workshop groups?” These comments reflect the engagement in writing and in this online workshop model. The writers were committed to honing their skills for work with language, imagery and message. Most of all, it was evident that believers find writing to be therapeutic and edifying for their journey, whether or not their work was published or even finished.

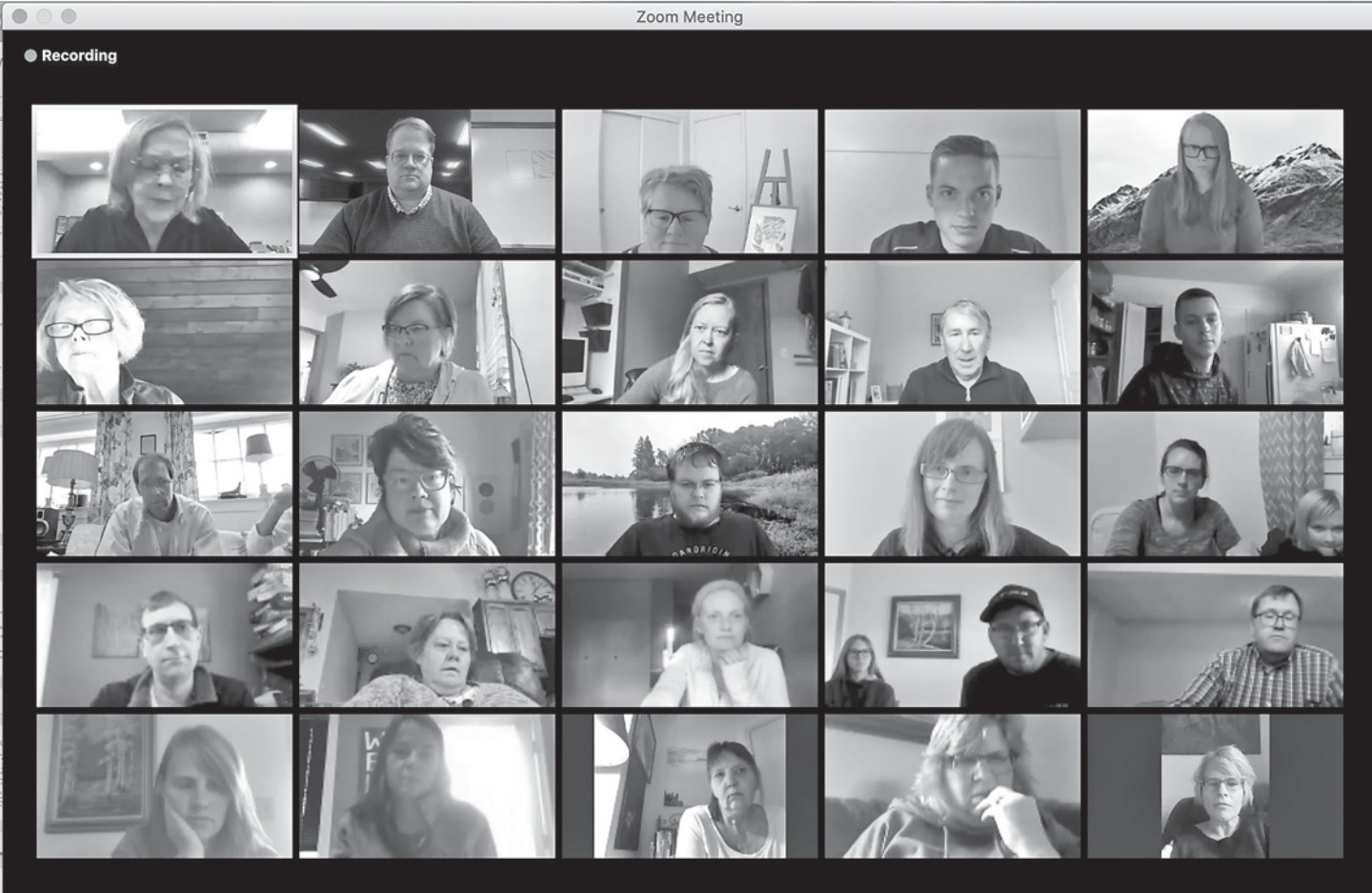


PHOTO: MATTHEW KERANEN

This screenshot of the zoom event shows writers and photographers from across the continent.

Session III: Photography and Photojournalism

This session briefly presented the history of photojournalism in America and outlined the objective of creating narrative from imagery. In essence, photojournalism is a news story told through pictures with little or no text. It began with pictures in newspapers during the Crimean War and the American Civil War when camera technology was growing as a means of reporting. Photojournalism tells a story through photographs, ones that can make a person stop and think, “Wow. That’s a great image.”

Photojournalists’ images are candid yet informative images, taken with intention and purpose. These images are commonly black and white, giving a timeless feel. The absence of color overall facilitates focus on the subject in the image rather than the hues of the subject matter. Black and white is a good choice when the color in a photo may serve only as a distraction from the intended message.

In addition to background review, the session looked at other elements to consider when photographing an image, such as the rule of thirds, lighting and composition.


This online photojournalism workshop intended to provide general tips for photos used for the *Voice of Zion*, *Shepherd’s Voice* and other publications. Typically, these periodicals need the mood of the photo to convey safety, warmth and peace. Sometimes a symbolic picture can have a neutral mood but suggest a theme. In general, photos are needed to illustrate, inform and inspire.

During this session, participants were asked to do a photo activity to help recognize how lighting can impact an image and how lighting and placement is of central importance in photography. The aim was to help participants learn what all goes into photographing and creating a final image for use in LLC publications.

Photo Exercise:

- Find something you can photograph a lot.
- Take a photo of that subject throughout the day (early, middle, evening, overcast lighting, window lighting).
- Analyze the different effects of which lighting does to an image.
- Practice, learn, repeat.
- Can you do this over the course of the next 1-2 days. Please send photos to me end of Monday, November 2nd and I can give feedback.

You can share images to me: anne@annelaho.com



This photo exercise would still be worthwhile for any of us to try this week.

In Summary

In part, what is lost by not having an in-person workshop is known to us. We know we were not able to assemble together in a camp setting, face to face, with long, relaxing dialogues about the writing process and the product. *We missed that opportunity.* Meanwhile, what may have been gained by using this new online format is unknown to us. New opportunities within this online model seemed likely: participants could join from thousands of miles away, writers with young children were able to join in even with children nearby, perhaps some curious ones Zoomed

with us for even a short time – just to listen. All of this may expand capacity for LLC Publications; the *Voice of Zion* and *Shepherd’s Voice* staff may find new writers and photographers who are willing to share their gifts. But what did this online gathering mean for each of us? What about readers, somewhere in the future, who read what these writers write, and in reading the pieces feel encouraged, less alone, or moved to share their joy of believing with another? In this, we pray and trust that God will bless this online workshop effort and all publications efforts as He sees best. ♦

NEW ARRIVALS

Born to
Helmiina & Jaakko Rimpioja
Saskatoon, SK
A boy!
Auden Eemil
September 30, 2020

Born to
Ed & Yvonne Tolkkinen
Monticello, MN
A boy!
Will Ernest
October 5, 2020

Born to
Davin & Sara Tarnanen
Cave Creek, AZ
A girl!
Lydia Joy
October 19, 2020

Born to
Tim & Melinda Kallio
Williston, ND
A boy!
Colt Anders
October 27, 2020

Born to
Daren & Melissa Hendrickson
Monticello, MN
A girl!
Laura Yvonne
November 1, 2020



PHOTO: MATTHEW KERANEN



PHOTOS: WENDY AGBOWADA

Staying Home and Staying Positive

The time at home has provided many quiet moments to sit and listen to services online. Rich and Bonnie have been thankful for the use of technology to be able to feel part of services even while at home.

Wendy Agbowada

Wendy Agbowada visited with her parents Rich and Bonnie Hendrickson about their time of isolation during the current pandemic.

“IT’S COMFORTING TO KNOW and feel that God is in control,” Bonnie begins. For most of this past year of the COVID-19 pandemic, Rich and Bonnie Hendrickson have been staying home to keep themselves safe and healthy. Their time of isolation has brought struggles and trials, as well as lessons on patience, acceptance and thankfulness.

Although they have been mostly confined to their home, the Hendricksons are thankful that they have been able to keep busy. Bonnie has been able to sew masks for family and friends, as well as for the local Rotary Club, which distributes them to clinics and hospitals. Rich has kept busy with projects at home and his part-time job. “In our daily life, we have tried to stay busy with those things that we can still do,” says Bonnie. “I try to not let myself think too much about the social aspect of this quarantine, because we know ‘it is what it is’ at this time.” Instead, they try to focus on the times when visits with family and other believers have been possible, such as when favorable summer weather allowed them to gather outdoors.

Still, Rich and Bonnie greatly miss the fellowship of the believers at services. “Of course, it is the best when one can attend church in person,” says Rich, “but we feel

so fortunate for the opportunities God has provided for services even during this time. Attending Monday evening Elder’s Services in Rockford has been enjoyable. We’ve been able to visit with believing friends outdoors after the service and it has been uplifting.” In addition to this, Rich and Bonnie are thankful for the blessing of technology with which they listen to sermons from around the continent.

Rich notes how interesting it has been to hear many of the sermons making mention of the current times, the importance of heeding the instructions of the authorities and of being a light in the world as a believer. Bonnie sighs in agreement. “The devotions have been so comforting because we can feel and understand that it is the same Word of God we have heard all our lives. We are not alone.” Then she smiles. “And we are thankful that God has prepared this even for people of our age, so that when we forget what time the devotion comes on, we can easily listen to the archive!” Rich adds, “It is so nice to go to sleep having heard even a small portion of God’s Word. It helps take one’s mind off other things and direct it to more important matters.”

“One big thing I miss is the singing,” Bonnie muses, when asked what everyday aspects she misses about services. “There is nothing like sitting in the pew surrounded by the voices of the congregation. However, we are so blessed to have so much music available to us. We were well provided for a long time ago already. Even

now, comforting music plays throughout the house during the day.” Both Bonnie and Rich express their joy in being able to attend online Sunday School with the children. Rich contemplates the new Sunday School medium: “This may be another new format that is here to stay in some form or other. We thoroughly look forward to the Sunday School lessons.”

“In spite of all that has happened this year,” says Rich, “we can still feel that we are part of God’s Kingdom. Circumstances have changed, but underneath it all, God’s Kingdom is still the same. In fact, this time of the pandemic has been a lesson on acceptance. Life has taken on a routine, whether it was something we anticipated or not, and being content with that is a form of acceptance.”

Rich continues, “It often comes to mind how nice we *do* have it – we have a home to live in, food is available, we can listen to services online, we are not totally isolated because we can easily communicate, and we are still enjoying good health. It is encouraging to focus on these blessings. We hear of friends who are suffering with illness, even hospitalization, after contracting the virus. We know we still face the risk of illness. However, we are thankful for the medical advancements even in this time and that more has become known and understood about the pandemic. It is also a relief to know that vaccinations and treatments are developing, but we understand this will take time. We have hope that we are turning a corner and trust that God’s hand will continue to guide and lead.” ♦



Rich happily received drive-by birthday wishes from children and grandchildren in April. God has blessed Rich and Bonnie with many family members nearby.



Bonnie has kept busy with baking throughout her time at home. Here she is preparing donuts for Christmas festivities.