

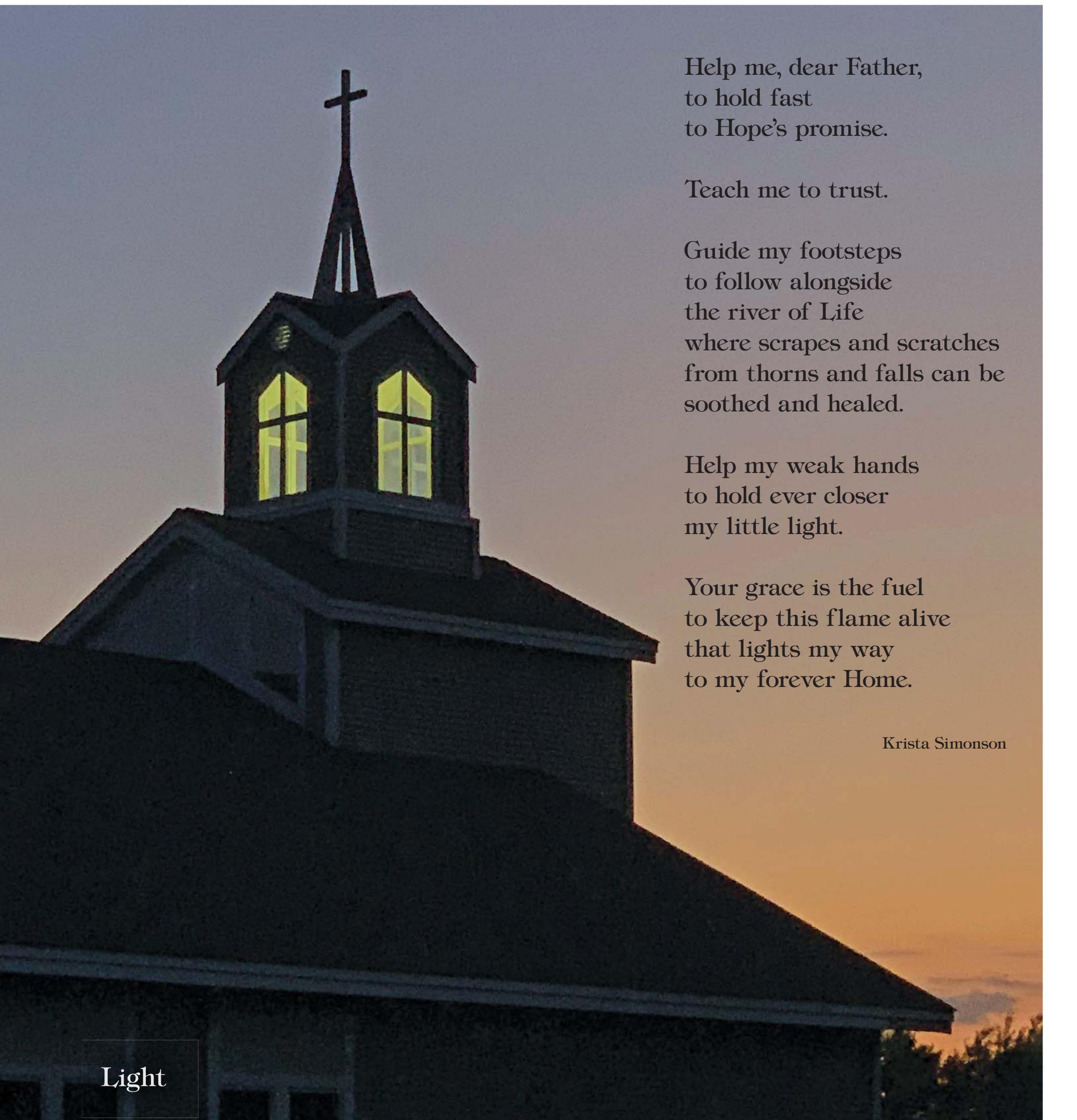
THE VOICE OF ZION

212 West 3rd Street, Monticello, MN 55362

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Number 6

June/July 2021



Help me, dear Father,
to hold fast
to Hope's promise.

Teach me to trust.

Guide my footsteps
to follow alongside
the river of Life
where scrapes and scratches
from thorns and falls can be
soothed and healed.

Help my weak hands
to hold ever closer
my little light.

Your grace is the fuel
to keep this flame alive
that lights my way
to my forever Home.

Krista Simonson

Light

Read about this theme on pages 6–8.

PHOTO: MARAE DELACEY

News and Notes from LLC

Eric Jurmu

I WISH TO OFFER congratulations to all 2021 high school, college and university graduates. You have achieved a milestone in life! May God grant life's blessings for each of you.

Each year in June we also celebrate Father's Day. May the heavenly Father bless you dear fathers for the love and care that you have extended to your families and loved ones. The days we live are troubled and your children need clear, loving instructions.

May God also bless those attending confirmation school this summer. It is an important time in the life of a young believer. Please remember that your parents and loved ones are sending you to camp with many prayers that you will make lasting friends, but mostly that your childlike faith will be strengthened.

Updates on LLC Activities

- At the end of May a new chapter of LLC history began when after fifteen years the office moved from Loretto, Minnesota into the new LLC office in Monticello, Minnesota. Many hours of volunteer labor allowed the project to be completed. While the old office served very well, we are thankful for God's abundant blessings in granting us a new home. After the last projects are completed, plans are to have an open house and dedication service for all who would like to join. May God richly repay you who have lovingly supported the effort with your generosity and labor.

- 2021 LLC Online Summer Services, July 1–4, will originate from the LLC office in Monticello, Minnesota. A few notes about services:

- The service motto is, *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10)*.

- The service schedule can be found on the LLC website and essential service information will be available to download.

- Sermons will be broadcast live on the LLC website, LLC YouTube channel

- A part of our service broadcast will also air July 10–11 on the SRK Summer Service Radio (kesaseuraradio.fi). This gives you an opportunity to listen again or to hear parts of the broadcast you may have missed.

- Facebook users can find service information at Laestadian Lutheran Church

- Instagram users can find information @laestadianlutheran

- At 2:00 p.m. each afternoon there will be a children's service.

- A congregation evening presentation will be broadcast Friday evening.

- A youth presentation using the motto of the services will be broadcast Saturday evening.

- The 2021 LLC Annual Meeting will be online and originate, Saturday July 3, from the LLC office in

Monticello, Minnesota. The meeting agenda, 2022 draft operating plan and video have been sent to help congregations prepare their delegates for the meeting. Meeting and voting details will be communicated to LLC congregations in early June.

- We continue to monitor if the COVID-19 pandemic will affect this summer's camp activities. As of now, we will hold all scheduled summer camps following local and state guidelines. Any proposed changes will be communicated to students and families with ample time to make any necessary adjustments.

- The pandemic has affected quite broadly in Ecuador and the believers there ask to be remembered. With travel restrictions in place, weekly online services continue for believers throughout Ecuador. May God continue to bless such opportunities as they are needed.

- Foreign mission trips have been paused through the 3rd quarter of this year. It may be possible to begin scheduling a few trips for late this fall as COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

- Over twenty applications for the 2022–23 opisto year were received in May. There are fourteen scholarships available, so the scholarship committee will meet in July to make selections and send word out soon thereafter. ♦

COLUMN



Allen Pirness

Columnist Allen Pirness writes from his home near Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, where he is a speaker for the Lethbridge congregation, husband to Jessica, father of four, and a commodities trader for Market Place Commodities.

Does God's Kingdom Have a Culture?

WE ALL HAVE ROOTS going back somewhere. Perhaps, like me, you have great-grandparents that emigrated from Finland to America. They brought with them the traditions of their culture that were meaningful to them. Many of these traditions have been woven into the fabric of North American Zion. For instance, there aren't many believers in North America that are unfamiliar with saunas, whether they are of Finnish ancestry or not. It is fine that we honor our heritage and remember where our families have come from. These traditions, however, are not what define God's kingdom.

During the past 20 years, the current time of visitation has spread into South America, Africa and Asia. It has been a joy for God's kingdom to bring the gospel to where God has opened hearts to receive it. It has also brought much comfort to believers in North America and northern Europe, from where the gospel has been sent. We have marveled how God's ways are so much higher than our ways and that His timing is perfect. Even during the time of the current pandemic, God has spread His gospel further. In fact, the frequency of services in Africa, Asia and South America, via Zoom and WhatsApp, has increased. God's ways are so much higher than our ways.

The kingdom of God has rejoiced over the number of languages in which the gospel is preached today. It has shown us that God regards every human and culture as equal. I have personally witnessed how the elements of foreign cultures that are dangerous to faith are now rejected by the children of God in those cultures. As a traveler in a foreign land, not understanding the language and culture, it has been reassuring to navigate

within those countries and cultures with the brothers and sisters there as escorts in faith.

The most important tie that binds believers together is not culture or traditions, it is the common experience that we have our sins forgiven. From believing the gospel, the spiritual connection facilitates deep friendships that transcend culture and language barriers. The believer's endeavor to travel with a clean conscience is the same around the world. Sin brings sorrow to the heart, and to hear the cleansing gospel preached in the language that you understand is essential. In the 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul wrote that it was more important that people understood what was being said than to witness other powerful demonstrations of the Spirit.

The Word of God is preached in several different languages and the speakers come from many different cultures and experiences. They have the same Spirit but different experiences and ways to explain God's Word. For example, Laestadius used examples that the people of Lapland would understand when he was explaining Scripture. These examples would have less significance to most of us and may be confusing for us. By contrast, I remember an occasion where the Word of God approached a farmer in her yard in Togo and through the translator, I heard how the kingdom of God was explained in examples that she understood. When God's Word is opened by the Holy Spirit, it edifies the listener, regardless of the way it is delivered from the speaker.

It is often said that the language of Canaan is used among God's children. This means there are things that we understand

In God's Time

TIME PASSES AND WE WATCH the signs of its passing (Eccl. 3). Along with agreeable weather, we now observe the pandemic loosen its grip; we relish the chance to visit friends and family. The need to mask up is over for most of us. It is only a memory. And those who lost loved ones during the pandemic have both grief and memories.

Time passes and we can ask: What remains? Faith.

God knows our whole life, our days and hours, from beginning to end (Ps. 139:16). Indeed, our God has arranged many events for our lives, bringing sorrow and gladness. Many have encountered loss and pain during this past year and some have found great comfort. We note the services carried out via the internet with remote congregations and those services in our home congregations that we can now hear in person. We recognize that some congregations on this continent and abroad may still be in the midst of pandemic restrictions. Also, we at this time acknowledge that some congregations are beset with spiritual unrest. Our God has allowed this also. During times of dissonance, we may almost instinctively want to put closure to the issue, to solve and restore. Yet, as in all things, we leave it to God. In His time, this too shall pass.

The battle of spirits is familiar in biblical history. From the time of the Old Covenant, there are several examples of human's self-reliance (e.g. 1 Kings 18). Also in the days of the early congregation, there were teachings not in accordance with Scripture. John, the Apostle of Love, instructed believers on how to recognize the true Spirit (1 John 4). The teachings of a wrong spirit trouble the Holy Spirit and cause division.

In battle, the Holy Spirit gives strength and wisdom to testify of Christ (1 Cor. 2:4). We can trust that God gives to

His own, among other gifts, the ability to distinguish between different spirits (1 Cor. 12:10,11). In God's time, these gifts will be used and all will resolve.

It would seem that after years of discord, the path to conclude this spiritual ferment would be clear. Speeches exposed differences. Letters sent. Invitations to "come and see" expressed. Yet, God has granted us a season of waiting, of prayer. Our prayers will be heard, as promised, but how and when they will be answered remains unknown. We continue our services and exhortations, acknowledging our human weakness and His omnipotence. This is God's kingdom, and the battle is His. He is our source of strength and clarity, hope and peace. We would like to take things into our own hands, but we can't. All our days, the phases of our lives, the heat of the battle – all this is in God's hands.

As in times past when battles raged, in our time too the battle will be won by the Word of God. For that reason it is good to remain on the foundation and healthy doctrine of God's Word as informed through His Spirit at services and other gatherings of believers. It is necessary to remain in the care of God and in the fellowship of believers.

May we all come to understand that we are helpless before God, and we are saved only by faith. May we turn to the old pathway, the path the saints of old have trod. And along that path illuminated by the lamp of God's Word, through His Holy Spirit, may we find grace to put away "every sin and burden."

Time passes, and with it our elders pass one by one to blessed rest. The younger generations remain on the battlefield. May we yet here today endeavor in grace and truth so that when our day shortens and autumn comes, we too are wheat ripe for the harvest. ♦

through faith, and when we speak about them with each other they are not understood by someone who does not have the same faith. For example, the oral proclamation of the forgiveness of sins doesn't bring comfort to the unbeliever. Translators know this challenge very well, how from language to language it's somewhat difficult to convey the true meaning of what is being said. The message is deeper than the literal words.

There are many international marriages in God's kingdom. Those families experience how they are rarely, perhaps never, able to be with both extended families at the same time. This can bring a loneliness that is unfamiliar to many. But when families of different cultural backgrounds come together, there is a mixing of cultures that adds a dimension to a family. It is an opportunity to learn and embrace the cultures and traditions that are introduced into your family through these bonds. It's interesting to try traditionally prepared foods or learn sayings and their meanings from different languages. When our experiences in life expand our horizons, we can observe how rich our heavenly Father is. He is able to call His own unto Him across languages and cultures. God shows us that all people are created in His image; however, sadly we must continue to acknowledge that people in this world are not able to see through God's eyes. Because of this people are treated differently due to skin color and other visible or perceived differences.

In our social gatherings we tend to gather more with those who share connections. It is useful to remember that we are all brothers and sisters in faith, and gathering with a variety of believers from all walks of life adds richness to our friendships. I have special memories of times spent together with fellow speaker brothers on speaking trips. We have been placed together and over that time, long-term friendships have started. It has been a joy to stay in touch with several of those brothers with whom I have served. We may live in different corners of the world, each living our daily life, yet remembering each other as dear brothers in faith. When we can connect on this – that the most important matter in life is to have our sins forgiven, then the relationship is founded on a much deeper footing than culture, language or any other foundation.

God's kingdom does have a culture. The Apostle Paul stated it well: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. The observations of our human portion can point to many temporal differences among God's children. The outward appearance and languages that the gospel is preached in have changed over the millennia but that same spiritual language of Canaan that answers to the Holy Spirit has never changed among the people of God. It is life's greatest treasure to remain in this kingdom with all my brothers and sisters. ♦

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BILINGUAL:
The Meeting
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2021 LLC LECTONARY

June 20, 2021

4th Sunday
after Pentecost
Lost and found again
Ps. 32:1,2,5-8;
Hos. 14:1-8;
Eph. 2:1-10;
Matt. 9:9-13

Serving the Lord

Ps. 145:3-7;
Isa. 66:18,19;
2 Tim. 3:14-17;
Acts 26:12-23;
Mark 3:13-19

June 24, 2021

St. John's Day
Preparer of the way
Ps. 92:1-5;
Isa. 45:8-12;
Acts 19:1-6;
Luke 1:57-66
Alt. Texts:
Mark 6:14-29;
Luke 1:67-79

July 11, 2021

7th Sunday
after Pentecost
The law of love
Ps. 28:1,2,6-9;
Josh. 24:21-27;
2 Kings 6:8-23;
Heb. 12:25-29;
Luke 6:27-31

June 27, 2021

5th Sunday
after Pentecost
Have mercy!
Ps. 13:1-6;
Job 35:1-8;
Rom. 14:13-19;
Luke 13:1-5

July 18, 2021

Transfiguration
Sunday
(8th Sunday
after Pentecost)
The glorified Christ
Ps. 97:1,2,5,6,10,11;
Exod. 34:29-35;
2 Cor. 3:7-18;
Luke 9:28-36

July 1, 2021

Canada Day
July 4, 2021
U.S. Independence
Day
**Thankfulness
for our native land**
Ps. 96:1-9;
Ps. 121;

July 25, 2021

9th Sunday
after Pentecost
Truth and falsehood
Ps. 92:4-9,12-15;
Jer. 7:1-7;
Heb. 12:14-17;
Matt. 7:24-29

July 4, 2021

Apostles' Day
(6th Sunday
after Pentecost)

August 1, 2021

10th Sunday
after Pentecost
**Faithfulness in caring
for God-given gifts**
Ps. 119:129-136;
Prov. 3:27-32;
Gen. 41:46-49,53-57;
Heb. 10:19-25;
Acts 20:17-24;
Luke 12:42-48

July 4, 2021

Apostles' Day
(6th Sunday
after Pentecost)

August 8, 2021

11th Sunday
after Pentecost
Times of visitation
Ps. 81:8-16;
Gen. 18:20-32;
Heb. 3:15-19;
Matt. 11:20-24



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHERIE BELGARDE

Children gather to view an online Sunday school lesson while Terri Hanson and Bonnie Bercier join in discussion.

Rolla Congregation, Small but United

Cherie Belgarde

IT IS A BRIGHT, SUNNY SUNDAY MORNING and songs of Zion can be heard as the children of God in the Laestadian Lutheran Congregation of Rolla, North Dakota, gather for services. The Rolla congregation has three adult members and six children, ages two to nine, which make up the Sunday school. We are small in numbers, but the Holy Spirit unites us in one body.

Services are held every Sunday morning at the home of one of the members. We usually listen live to one of the sermons broadcasted from neighboring Minnesota congregations. After services, we have a Sunday school class for the children. Here, the children learn their prayers and then listen intently to the lesson that has been prepared. The lesson is followed by a question-and-answer time, and after that the children color a picture pertaining to the lesson. It is so amazing how children learn fast and remember so much. Often, they teach the adults lessons too!

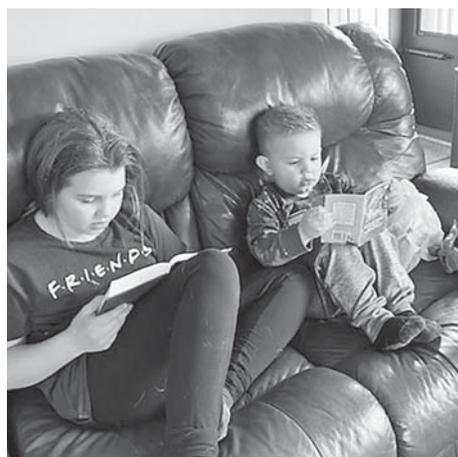
During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic we no longer gathered together to listen to live services. Instead, we would all agree which sermon we would listen to separately in our own homes. That way, we felt we were all together even though the physical

fellowship of each other was missing. God still richly blessed our services. We can only be amazed and thankful that His Word cannot be silenced.

In addition to our listening to live broadcasts on Sunday morning, we have had Zoom services several times during the past year, served by speakers who were originally assigned to travel to our area. These services have been encouraging and edifying also.

Before the pandemic our area has been served by speakers in person usually every three months. These have been uplifting times and we were joyful to meet other believers. Sometimes the speakers were unfamiliar to us, but in a very short time we truly knew each other from the heart. Life-long fellowships and friendships have been formed from these domestic mission trips.

Overall, the pandemic probably has not affected us so much here in a small congregation. We have once again been able to resume our services every Sunday and meeting in person. God provides whatever we need whenever we need it. We only need to have trust in Him and understand He is truly leading and guiding our footsteps, as the words of Isaiah state, “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it...” (Isa. 30:21). We pray we always continue to hear His Word and walk in the light. ♦



FAR LEFT: Services are held at Cherie Belgarde's house with Neil Waaraniemi serving the Rolla congregation.

LEFT: Johnee Hanson singing Songs of Zion during Sunday internet services and Tex Hanson following big sister's action.s

The Call to God's Kingdom

Sam Roiko

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Luke 9:57–62

The time had come in Jesus' public ministry when he was turning his gaze to Jerusalem. His time of public ministry was coming to an end, and He was well known throughout the land. He many times had a multitude traveling with him.

Luke records for us three different individuals who were nearby when Jesus was traveling. One volunteered to Jesus that he would follow Jesus wherever He went. The reply of Jesus was a comment that foxes and birds have places to live, but the Son of man does not have a place where to lay His head. This does not sound like a welcoming or inviting response. However, our Lord and Savior knew the hearts of all men. Did He hear the self-assurance of one who thought he could follow Jesus by his own ability, courage, and understanding? Jesus's words to the man point out that following Him, Jesus, means 'denying oneself, and the need to take up the cross and following him' (Matt. 8:34).

One's Own Understanding Leads Nowhere

One's own ability and understanding may bring one a short distance, but the end is often unfortunate: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). Peter, on Maunday Thursday evening, promised Jesus, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33). Peter's self-assurance resulted in him being found in the place of one who denied his Lord and Savior.

Another man heard the invitation from Jesus to "follow me." He responded with the request to first go bury his father. Jesus replied to "let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Jesus does not disregard the death or burial of loved ones; in

The Kingdom of God Is Not Meat and Drink

Mikko Pasanen

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Rom. 14:13–19



The Apostle Paul writes to the Roman believers whom he had not actually visited on his missionary journeys. The whole letter, therefore, is a clear explanation of the foundations of faith in which Paul explains simply how we believe.

Did some congregation members have a dim understanding of believers' freedom and grace? Many Roman citizens at that time lived an indecent lifestyle. Were believers also affected by this lifestyle?

Apostle Paul was certainly aware of the Roman culture. However, perhaps that was not the only matter in question. Perhaps also the flame of love flickered weakly in some believers. Some of the Jewish believers in Rome thought that the religious laws of the Jews must be followed. Paul had heard about this from other believers and wanted to encourage the congregation in Rome to accept others' viewpoints without breaking the love.

Are Cultural Differences a Matter of Faith?

Paul reminds Rome's Jewish believers that the Jewish customs and laws were not required teachings for all believers. For example, circumcision, a custom of the Jews, was not necessarily a matter of faith. Rather, "He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter..." (Rom. 2:29). Cultural differences such as this could even have led to a rift between believers who were Jewish and those who were Gentiles, extinguishing the flame of faith and suppressing love.

Likewise, we today do not want to add burdens onto believers. Instead, we wish to help other believers in their endeavor. Paul tells the Romans, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20). "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:13). The enemy of the soul would certainly prefer to see love broken over disputes of the law, but our salvation relies on faith, not the law.

Instead of arguing about the law, Paul teaches believers to show love by "distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13–14). Paul continues, "Be of the same mind one toward another.

Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:16–19). Therefore, Paul advises to "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Let Us Live Peaceably

Today as in Paul's time, we battle against the enemy of the soul who would wish to break the love between believers. When following the instruction of a governing body is in question, God's Word says that authority is of God. In this, we want to be obedient and a light to the world.

Thus, we cannot rise up against authority – has not God both ordained and given a sword to authority? (Rom. 13:1,4). There is no authority that does not come from God. If we rise up against dominion, we also rise up against God's ordinance. Doing so will result in punishment. Do we not want to do the right thing so there is no need to fear the authorities? As ordained of God, authority does not carry the sword in vain, but punishes the wrongdoer.

Again, the believer wants to keep love and live according to God's Word. God's people live in freedom and not in bondage. God's children have freedom – not the freedom to do or live in sin, but the freedom of the believer to live in this world trusting that Jesus will return to take us to the home of His Father, where He has now gone to prepare a dwelling place for the children of God.

Righteousness, Peace and Joy

As Paul explains to the Romans, God's kingdom does not demand laws and commandments. Instead, God's kingdom is freedom, righteousness, joy, peace and love. When sins are forgiven, a believing heart does not want to offend others, much less the community of believers. However, when sin besets and roots into the heart, the kingdom of God begins to look old-fashioned; it begins to show all its faults and mistakes. No grace for another can be found.

Then also, when unforgiven sin remains on the conscience, the office of the Holy Spirit will begin to fade with the weight of sin. The bells of grace are not desired to be heard. The spiritual connection is cut and the office of the Spirit shifts to the office of the Word. Oh, how sad when the Spirit departs: joy is gone and peace dims. Love is cold and mercy decreases. Freedom is destroyed. The instruction of the Holy Spirit and of grace is not heard. Ended is the eternal joy and in its place is hatred, sorrow, bitterness, frenzy, malice, breaking and grating. Faith of the heart changes to unbelief.

Instead of turning to unbelief, the fallen should listen to the Holy Spirit's grace instruction and humble themselves onto repentance. This instruction is the same today as it was in Paul's time. If love has been broken and a judging, critical attitude weighs on the conscience, the call comes from God's house that you may believe your sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious, atonement blood. ◆

fact He wept with Mary and Martha over the death of their brother Lazarus (John 11:33). Here He wanted to remind that the preaching of God's kingdom goes forth to those who are yet living here on earth – those who have passed away have no ability to change their fate, as the rich man in the parable realized too late (Luke 16:19–31). This is why Jesus has sent His own, to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins, in His name (Luke 24:47), saying, "the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:9).

Keep the Gaze on the Goal

The third man heard the call to come follow the Lord Jesus, and said "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house." Jesus replied, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." The use of a plough to till the soil for planting must have been familiar. When guiding a plough, one needed to look ahead to ensure the rows were straight. The best way was to look to the destination, the end of the row. If one's gaze turned away from the goal, the plough would turn off the path as well. This metaphor serves to highlight the place our faith must have in our lives.

Jesus' words also remind of the first commandment: "I am the Lord thy God... thou shalt have no other gods before me." If something or someone becomes more important than God, it has become a false god. Jesus Himself said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). Even family relations, those whom we live with and are closest to, cannot be more important than the gift of faith.

Take Heed

These examples show us how important it is to take heed and pay attention when we hear the call into God's kingdom. The call into God's kingdom is unconditional. When the disciples Peter, James and John heard the call, they forsook all, and followed him (Luke 5:11). Nothing remained more important than following the Lord and Savior. When we begin to place conditions on our entry into God's kingdom, the call is not accepted. We cannot demand God to show us our errors or prove to us why we are not correct. Rather, as the Holy Ghost says, Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts! (Heb. 3:7,8). He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:7) The gospel of God's kingdom is also unconditional. To the poor, the gospel is preached (Matt. 11:5). The preaching of God's kingdom is sweet and beautiful (Isa. 40:9). ◆

The Light that Is Great within Us

He said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? (Mark 4:21).

This question posed by Christ reminds us what He has done for us. Therefore, we wish to honor that light by setting it to shine in our lives. This Home and Family section presents the thoughts of believers about how we can let the light of Christ that abides in us shine freely in this world.

A City on a Hill

Ruth Kiviahde

“YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Matt. 5:14). I have thought of this Bible verse many times throughout my life. The Holy Spirit shines brightly from believers as we simply live our lives. We do not need to confess our faith in words for our faith to be noticed. I have multiple experiences that validate this.

We moved to Flagstaff, Arizona with seven children. This was an area with very few believers. The school my children attended had no other believing children. Each day I would send the children on the school bus with a prayer, “Please God, keep them safe and give them strength to be believing children in school.” When we went to parent-teacher conferences, the third grade teacher started the conference with a multitude of questions on our parenting style and methods. We were confused but answered all her questions. After mulling over our answers, she tells us how our third grade child is different. He had qualities that she wanted to instill in her own children. She decided the difference between her parenting style and ours was we had a job list at home. She decided she will start giving her children jobs at home. What she did not understand is she was seeing a child who is raised in a home where the Holy Spirit is.

Another example is in my work life as a nurse. At one point in my working career, I had the opportunity to work on a unit with six other believing moms. I had one coworker pull me aside to tell me how much she loves working with the people from our church. She felt like each one of us had an aura of peace surrounding us. Again, she was seeing the Holy Spirit in us shining brightly.

We have been blessed with twelve children to raise here on earth. This fact alone speaks loudly on how different we may be from our neighbors, coworkers and those around us. Large families can bring comments that are negative in words or tone. A positive comment in return, with a smile, has turned the conversation around. At the grocery store with four preschoolers: “That’s a cart full.”

“Yep, a cart full of love!”

At work when a co-worker finds out the size of our family: “You are crazy!”

“It’s crazy fun!” Speaking positively about our families to those around us is important. It is another way for the Holy Spirit to shine. God has blessed us with churches, camps and believing escorts. These are great places to go to for strength and support.

Believers and believing families are a light to the world. Often, without words this light can shine. We go through each day doing our earthly calling: working, raising children, attending school and community functions with Christ in our hearts. The Holy Spirit within us does not go unnoticed. ♦



PHOTO: RUTH KIVIAHDE

The Kiviahde cart-full-of-love is ready to help with the family shopping.

Do Unto Others

Ruth DeLacey

I AM SURE YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH “Do unto others as you would like others to do unto you.” This is the golden rule which originates from the Bible. One place is in Matthew 7:12: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” It is actually referenced three places in the Bible!

What does this mean? For a young child I would say it means treat others how you want to be treated. If you don’t want someone to hit you, then don’t hit them. Or, if you don’t like someone taking toys away from you, that is a good reason not to take things away from others.

I think as we get older the meaning can broaden to acceptance, accepting all people, even though we don’t agree with what they do. I worked in an elementary school for more than ten years. We were instructed and expected to make everyone feel like they belong, that

they matter and are a value to the classroom and school. Everyone is there for the same reason – to learn no matter their age, size, color, behavior, family situation or any other way we might want to group people. We were challenged to see the similarities instead of the differences! We were expected to be compassionate and caring to everyone. I think this is important beyond the school setting. I think we should ALWAYS look at people with that lens!

If we are honest with ourselves, we wouldn’t want to be treated like we don’t belong, like we’re “less than” or strange or backwards. We wouldn’t want others to look at us with eyes of judgment and contempt. Rather, we would want an attitude of acceptance and compassion and validation. We would like people to care about us and our existence and what we stand for and where we come from. It is unacceptable by words or actions to make others feel they don’t belong or they aren’t good enough, just like we don’t want to be treated that way.

How He Became a Soldier of Christ

Nathan Muhonen

I MET A SOLDIER at my nephew Derek's wedding. Derek had served in the US Army as a soldier and a mechanic on the Blackhawk helicopters for six years. His best friend for those six years was now watching Derek's wedding before the eyes of God and God's congregation. This soldier, Matt, was later called into a different kind of service, to be a soldier in faith.

While Derek served in the military, stationed in Tennessee, God blessed him with a good friend whose name was Matt Sloan. Matt wasn't a believer at the time, but there was a mutual trust that Derek and Matt shared both in their call of duty and in their free time. Matt sensed that Derek was not comfortable partaking in the things of this world. Matt found more enjoyment hanging out with Derek in their free time rather than going with the other guys to the movies or bars where worldly music played, vulgar language was spoken and alcohol was consumed. God's ways are always far above our ways. Derek did not realize how God was using him to be a light in this dark world. Neither did Matt realize how God was preparing the soil of his heart to receive the gift of faith.

Time passed and Derek's six years of service to our country came to an end. And even though Derek was happy to return to civilian life, he would be leaving a good friend behind. But Derek and Matt promised to stay in touch and it wasn't long before Matt called Derek and said that he would be in Colorado on a training mission, close to Glenwood Springs. Just by chance Derek would be in Glenwood Springs at that time.

It was a happy reunion for them and a chance for Matt to meet many other believing young people. Another time Matt and Derek were able to meet in Montana when Matt was on another training mission. Again Matt was able to meet a large group of youth who believed. It was on this trip that Matt began to sense a level of peace and comfort within this group, a peace like he had never felt in other groups. Yet he himself did not feel the connection that they had. Matt grew up in a family that did not attend church services on a regular basis. He did not have great Bible knowledge. Yet he felt drawn to the believers.

During these months, Derek had begun a relationship with a young woman named Morgan. One thing led to the next and soon there was the announcement of Derek and Morgan's intentions to get married. Matt was not about to miss out on a close friend's wedding. He joined Derek's family on the weekend of the wedding and spent time with many believers from Colorado, Montana and Minnesota, among them young people he had met before.

At the wedding, Matt witnessed the vows as Derek and Morgan were joined together as one before God. It was a wedding like Matt had never seen before. He felt comfort in witnessing his close friend getting married surrounded by guests who seemed to be at peace. Matt watched as during the reception young people gathered around the bride and groom and sang a farewell song wishing God's blessings to them.

This was the moment when I noticed Derek's young friend from the military standing back, away from the group of singers, taking it all in. I decided to introduce myself to him and maybe chat a little.

"What are your thoughts?" I asked him.

"It seems like everyone here is family."

"It is so. This is God's house and we are God's children," I replied. We were then able to visit about how the way to heaven goes through God's kingdom here on earth. Apostle Paul describes God's kingdom as a body wherein Jesus is the head and we are the other members of that one body, and there is only one body even as there is only

In fact, we should attempt to build those relationships and those bridges to others. The only way to have a true impact on others is through love, the first fruit of faith. And these connections are essential to one who may have an awakened conscience and longs to hear the sweet message of the gospel of forgiveness of sins. If we've built walls instead of bridges, this possibility that a seeking one would approach us may be less likely.

We ALL carry insecurities, we ALL have felt different in some way or other at some time in our lives. Many things in life can make us feel different. We can feel "different" if we aren't dressed like others or look like others. We can feel different if we are having a bad day or have worries weighing us down.

I remember feeling "different" in high school. I was the only believer in my school for many years, and I don't remember anyone treating me unkindly due to my religious beliefs. But by not participating in school sports or plays or joining school friends on outings to the

movies or parties, I was and felt different. I can't imagine how difficult it would have been if I would have been teased or poked fun of.

We have so much to learn from each other. We are all unique in looks, actions and life experiences. Not just believers but everyone in the world is different! God made us that way. We not only look different, but we act different – and it is truly a beautiful thing!

When I observed children in the school setting see beyond differences and make allowances to include everyone, my heart would swell. I watched a group playing a game which included a nonverbal student. The others were able to understand what he was meaning through his few words and hand gestures with no awkwardness. And I have seen a group enthusiastically cheering for a teammate that was more of a hindrance than a help to a team. There were no complaints at his shortcomings, knowing he did his best! When I see this the emotion bubbles up and tears come to my eyes at the

sheer beauty of it! My heart overflows with love for these kids that can embrace the differences and accept others for who they are!

Even people who choose to look different or act different in a way that is contrary to our beliefs need respect. Some people do make choices that are contrary to the Bible's teachings. I think it is good to remember their first and biggest sin is unbelief. If they don't have the Holy Spirit how can they gauge right from wrong? I don't feel that we have a reason to treat someone poorly, just because we are given the grace privilege to have our sins forgiven and they are not believing.

If we look at others with acceptance and love, think of the huge impact we can make in the lives of people around us! Even if we are different from each other, we can show them kindness – thus making the difference insignificant!

I believe this is a way we can be a light! ♦



PHOTO: HAYDEN SIMONSON

On his last helicopter flight in the U.S. Army, Matt looks out at the Fort Campbell training landscape.

one kingdom of God. Matt listened intently but did not receive the grace of repentance at this time, even though I did ask him. We exchanged phone numbers and hoped that we could meet again someday.

Then, maybe a month or two later when I was attending a meeting at the Rockford church on a Saturday, my mind thought about Matt. I sent him a quick text that said, "Hi Matt, how are you doing?" He quickly responded with a phone call and said he would love to talk but must leave on a training mission. He asked if I could please call him back in the evening when he will be off duty. I promised I would.

That evening came, and when Matt and I were able to visit, I didn't have to explain a lot of things because after a short amount of time I asked Matt if he would want to believe all his sins forgiven. He said, "Yes, that is what I want." I preached the forgiveness of all his sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious blood. He then said, I can't explain it, but it feels like a big weight has been lifted off of me."

For the rest of the call, we talked about the new battle of faith that Matt will now begin and that will not end until he passes from this life into eternity. Matt understood two matters: He is a sinner, and he is in need of God's grace and forgiveness.

The gospel became dear to Matt as it is to all believers. We agreed that though the temptations and pleasures of this world are strong, there is nothing more desirable than to make it to heaven. And the Bible teaches us to "walk in the light as he is in the light, having fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sins." Now each time we talk our main focus is the way and the journey of faith and to comfort one another with the gospel. ♦

Teachers Can Be Lights, Too



PHOTO: BRIELLE MUHONEN

Brielle poses in front of her school after her first week teaching first grade.

Brielle Muhonen

EARLY IN MY PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION, I was placed as a student teacher at Little Mountain Elementary in Monticello, Minnesota. I wondered how it would be having believing students at the school. Would it be strange seeing children at church functions and in the classroom? Would it be difficult to maintain professional boundaries? How would I handle the inevitable questions that would come my way about my faith once fellow teachers figured out that I was a believer and that I knew these children through my church?

After multiple teaching assignments in various elementary

settings within the Monticello school district, I saw how thrilled the believing students were to have me at Little Mountain Elementary, and the feeling was mutual. We shared a special bond, having similar experiences and the same beliefs. Their parents were happy that I was in their children's class as well. After the positive student teaching experience and as I was seeking a permanent teaching position, I knew that I would consider it an added blessing to teach in a school with believers.

I applied for a 5th grade teaching position at Dassel-Cokato Middle School, expressing my understanding of and appreciation for the large Finnish population in that district, being of Finnish heritage myself. During my interview, I was asked about my Finnish background, my time in Finland studying abroad and who my relatives were that lived in Cokato. This aspect of my background was clearly an asset to my job-hunting.

After being hired for the 5th grade position, I saw that my coworkers were familiar with the "Finns," as they affectionately call both us and the Apostolic branches in the Dassel-Cokato area, but they had many questions. I was soon asked many of those questions about our faith, traditions and the differences between the different Finnish churches. It was initially intimidating, but I was given the strength to be honest in confessing my faith. One coworker remarked that she had been waiting for years to be able to ask these questions. She was thankful to finally have someone she felt comfortable to ask.

Throughout my four years teaching, I have felt love and understanding from staff I have worked with. It has been a joy to be able to advocate for believing families. God has blessed me with a job that I love, coworkers who respect my faith and families who appreciate my background.

Though my current work setting isn't largely diverse in ethnicities, each of my students has a unique set of experiences and a fundamental need to belong. Along with my coworkers and my own teachers who have shown love and support to me, I also strive to do the same for all of my students. Just like us, all of my students long and deserve to be respected and accepted. ♦

Questions for Thought and Discussion:

1. Sing or read the words to SHZ 560. How does the flickering candle relate to one's light in the world?
2. Believers may perhaps not see themselves as having much light to shine – why is this?
3. Lights in the Bible were often candles or lamps interchangeably. What does light symbolize?
4. Think of a time your light was almost out. What caused that light to glow brightly again?
5. The weakest light can still illuminate darkness. Discuss.

Light unto the World

Mari Andersen

When you think of light, do you think of the life of Christ? Jesus says, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall

not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Christ is the light of the world. "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). When we abide in Christ, He abides in us and if He abides in us, so then also does His light.

Do you ever think of how Christ shined through in all He did, was, is, and is to come? Looking at the miracles He did from turning water into wine, healing the sick and blind, and feeding multitudes with but a few loaves and fishes we see His marvelous works. But do you ever look at some of the other things He did such as turning over tables and demonstrating His anger and indignation?

"Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, it is

written, my house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:12,13).

Do you look at this and see light?

"Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:1,2). Jesus rebuked them, telling the parable of the lost sheep (verses 3–7).

When you think of dining with tax collectors and sinners versus choosing to be in the fellowship of those who believe – or with His followers – is there light in that?

Again and again we see in the New Testament how Jesus even rebukes the Pharisees, such as in Matthew 23. He calls them hypocrites, serpents, brood of vipers and openly calls them out for what they are doing.

Do you see light and love even in this?

It may be easy to see the light in all the good things in life and in others, but it is not so easy to see the light in difficulties, in rebuke, in spending time with those outside of what you believe. But in those places is the darkness of

THE SOWER'S BASKET

One Warm Spring Day

Steve Laiho

ONE WARM SPRING DAY, a year and a half after my believing mother passed away, I decided to stop in and see how my dad was doing. As I let myself into his house, my dad called out, "Steve, is that you?"

"Yes, it's me," I answered, surprised. I hadn't told him I was coming

I found my dad sitting in the family room. I sat down and waited for him to continue, as to how or why he hoped it was me coming to visit. There was silence. He then asked what he had been pondering, "What was it that you said a person could do and a minister didn't have to be there?" At this point of my life, I wasn't a minister, but I knew exactly what my dad was asking. "Do you want to have your sins forgiven?" He answered yes. God, in His wondrous ways, granted my dad the grace to believe. My dad marveled that he could be a believer as he had never attended Sunday school or confirmation school or even been a member of a church. Three months later, my dad was called to his heavenly home.

Throughout my childhood and teen years, my dad was never a believer. When I graduated from high school my dad wrote me a letter which instructed, "Never forget your church." The letter he wrote to me when I married, had the same instruction. In his old age, he could have rested on laurels of self-righteousness, recounting all the good he had done in his life. He was a good father and husband who worked hard to provide for his family. He was honest and kind, well-liked by neighbors and coworkers. Yet, God revealed to my dad, something was missing from his life. When my mom passed away, the Holy Spirit no longer was in our home.

What's your favorite thing about spring?

the world and in those places He calls one to shine. It may be easier to shine amongst other believers, but a candle burning in a room full of candles – does it pierce the darkness? Indeed, if you take that candle and you walk into a room where there is no light, how much more does it pierce the darkness? This is where He has also called you to do His work.

How do you shine? You shine by your conduct and the fruits of the Spirit. You shine by being in the world though not of it.

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–25).

What does it mean if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit? What or who is the Spirit? It is the Holy Spirit, that lives inside of a child of God, that burns like fire in your very soul, that causes a light that burns within you to shine, that causes you to be hot or cold that He might not spit you out for being lukewarm!

Allow the light of the Spirit to shine, not just in the easy places, but also in the difficult places, in confronting one another in love. At work or school choose not to swear with the others – they will notice

the difference in you. When you choose to have lunch with them, they will notice you don't drink and how you speak. If you go out for coffee with friends from work, don't participate in the gossip that flows. Don't get caught up in how you look or trying to be cool; instead, focus on how you behave. Is it kind? Is it loving? Is it long-suffering? Your life as a believer shines as a witness of God. Listen to friends' woes, and pray for them. And pray that God softens hearts and opens doors. We are called to be a light in the darkness of this world!

When we shine in the darkness, God opens doors. When we shine amongst each other we remember God is ever with us and feel wrapped in His love. When we shine in our homes, we teach our children, our younger or older siblings what God's love and light looks like, that when we go out from our homes His light may shine.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Be encouraged to abide in Christ, who is the light! Abide in Him and may He abide in you, that your light may shine through to those who are searching and seeking, those who are hurt and lost. Shine through in your speech and conduct, through the fruits of the Spirit. And praise God who is our light. ♦

When writing this, I realized if my dad was still alive he would have had his hundredth birthday on April 28th. I have many fond memories of him and I'm sure there's much I've forgotten, but I've played this one through my mind often over the years since he's been gone. Mom and Dad never shared the gospel in their 52 years they were married. I take comfort that they are sleeping the rest of the blessed.

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1,2). For those who are praying for loved ones who are travelling in the darkness of this world “where there's life there's hope”. God is still calling through His Spirit, those lost sheep to His sheepfold. We watch the world and all its enticements crumble around us. As the preacher says in Ecclesiastes “vanity of vanities; all is vanity.” The times of peace in this world are fleeting. God in his mysterious ways is showing us in these times how the things of this world are not eternal. As God's children, we place our trust in Him. By keeping faith and a good conscience, the light of a believer shines in a world full of darkness. ♦



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE LAIHO

Edward Ivori Laiho passed away in July 1996 at the age of 75.

> The spring migration is such a natural wonder! I am serenaded by a variety of birds on my early morning walk and I marvel at God's creation! I enjoy hiking in various state parks and nature preserves in search of the returning birds. Birds are such a simple joy and a reminder to be content with what God has given me. SHZ 341 reminds, “Oh, if like the bird all my days could begin with thankfulness singing to praise Thee.” – Sara



PHOTO: SARA AHO

> Seeing the plant life blossom with renewed zest for life after the long winter where I live reminds me that God has been taking care of us humans also and will continue to do so until we make it to heaven! – Brittany L.

> In the autumn, life retreats in nature. Animals prepare for winter, some fly south. Light wanes and trees know to take leave of their leaves. The cold forces creatures to burrow and take shelter. In the spring, the opposite occurs, and it is a miracle – year after year. Warming days bring a promise of summer! – F.

> Spring is usually when people graduate from high school and college. It's a special time to honor those accomplishments and support them as they move forward on their life's pathway. May God bless all this spring's graduates! – Lyn

What kinds of camps should we hold that aren't offered yet?

To answer, send an email message to fromthereader@llchurch.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 August 1, 2021. Look for the answers to this question in the September *Voice of Zion*!

God's Word Is Our Light

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Ps. 119:105).

For this Youth page, we asked young people from Dunblane, Saskatchewan, to reflect on their daily lives and consider how their light might shine in the world. The articles here show how they see themselves in their settings, where young people might be watchful with behavior and how God's Word continues to be a light unto their paths.

Light Comes from God's Kingdom

Haleigh Haapala

HOW ARE WE, as God's children, a light unto the public? We want to portray a positive light towards the people of this world because of what Jesus has done for us. This can be done by being respectful wherever we go, whether it's the mall, a restaurant, or any place in public. Respect is shown by cleaning up any mess that is made, having manners, and being kind to others.

As youth, our own sinfulness and the peer pressure of others may cause us to act in negative or inappropriate ways. We might sometimes act as if we are superior to those around us. We might hide our light under a bushel, as the Bible describes it. Instead, we want to be humble, welcoming to others and to show Jesus' light in us.

Being part of a small-town, believers here are known by the entire community. We are notably different because we don't follow some current trends. There have been comments on how we always seem happy. We have much to be happy for and they recognize that. They can see the light shining forth through us believers.

It is important that we continue to be respectful within our communities because that is where we are noticed and where God's kingdom is known and labeled. Being rude and disrespectful would not be showing the light of God's Word. Even when going to the mall, we might be different to some around us through our dress and perhaps how we talk. We might stick out among the public. We wish to remember that in each interaction we represent God's kingdom, sinners who are forgiven. We would like our behavior to be positive and extend an invitation to services: "Come and see" (John 1:46).

We want people to see the joys that come with believing. It is our role to spread the Word of God to the unbelievers. That is why we strive to be respectful to everyone, because the light from God's kingdom is shown through the believers. This light may cause someone to notice, to ask questions and to receive the gospel. ✦



PHOTO COURTESY OF BREIGH HAAPALA

Whether in a small town or in the city, believers endeavor to conduct themselves respectfully.

We Wish to Be Lights at School

Kaci Simonson and Abigail Haapala

HOW ARE WE A LIGHT at school?

At our school in Lucky Lake, Saskatchewan, believers make up a good portion of the student body. Most of the teachers, staff and students know how we believe. In addition to confessing faith to others, we can show Jesus' light in other ways as well.

Being a light means behaving according to God's Word. This would entail respecting and including those around us. We need to remember to include our unbelieving classmates and make them feel welcome in our believing friend groups. In our school it is easy to separate ourselves from the unbelievers, but when we visit with them, we realize that they want to be included in our groups as well. No one wants to be left out.

In our conversations, it is good to talk about how we believe but it is also good to have conversations that are about things all can relate to such as school. By doing this we are making our friend group a more comfortable and welcoming place for those who don't believe the same way as we do. We want to treat them with sensitivity – the same way we want to be treated, as the Bible tells us.

Being a light in our school also means we show our teachers appreciation and thankfulness for all the work they put into lesson preparation and into teaching us. We respect our teachers by being on time, coming prepared and listening to their instructions.

It is also important to respect the school, the community and our classmates' personal property. We want to be careful with others' property and return it in the same condition we received it. On our school grounds and anywhere in the community, we clean up after ourselves and don't do damage to the area. It is always good to be a light onto the world everywhere we go.

We want to be a light to fulfill God's Word, to let His light shine through us to those who are around us. When we don't act like believers, it pricks our conscience, and we feel the weight of what we have done. Our human faults and shortcomings don't always reflect God's Word; we try but we often fail. Grace teaches us that even these matters can be put away with the preaching of the gospel, and we can continue being a light onto the world. ✦

the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.



PHOTO: KACI SIMONSON



PHOTO: REED SIMONSON

A game of baseball in Phys. Ed. and playing volleyball at haps are opportunities to include everyone and show respect for others.

Light at Haps

Ethan Ylioja

ONE THING WE HAVE LEARNED during the COVID-19 pandemic is that we have underappreciated haps. It is no small thing that young people can gather and sing songs and hymns of Zion and discuss matters of faith. That type of fellowship is nice to have, and it is unfortunate that we cannot gather together as often or in large groups in most places during these uncertain times with the restrictions in place.

Along with appreciation comes respectful behaviors. We are a light for others at haps by being respectful to the homeowners and their property as well as their neighbors. We are a light by following the rules and laws of our country as well as bylaws of the areas we might gather in. We are a light by peacefully finding solutions to any problems that may arise. This light is not ours personally, but it is Jesus who shines His light onto the world through us.

We can show respect to the homeowner by greeting them when entering, not defacing their property and by thanking them as we leave. We youth demonstrate appreciation of the homeowner's property by not destroying anything or disregarding their property and

leaving it in a worse condition than it was when we arrived. At haps, we make evident our courtesy to the homeowner and their property by respectfully and honestly dealing with any problem that may present itself. Our politeness can be shown to the homeowner's neighbors by also refraining from neglecting their privacy and property. We can demonstrate good manners to them by not being too loud or damaging their property. We are thoughtful of the homeowner's property and community by following the laws and policies and trying to keep the noise and traffic at a minimum, showing general courtesy to all others living nearby. In the event of a problem, the best way to solve it is with civility and honesty, to own up to any mistakes or any caused offenses, and of course to ask for forgiveness.

Haps events are good for young people and in order for us to continue enjoying haps, we must show respect to homeowners and their property, neighborhoods and communities. Through these gatherings, Jesus shines his light onto the world through us. At haps we shine with the light of God because we endeavor to believe and conduct ourselves like believers. ♦

Distance Learning at the LLC Office

Kate Fredrickson

MY NAME IS KATE Fredrickson and I am in the 5th grade at Delano Intermediate School. Sometimes I go to work with my mom to do my assignments on a laptop.

My mom is Maria Fredrickson and she works at the LLC office. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our school was closed for in person learning. Some days, I would have had to be home alone, so my mom took me to work with her.

I have math, reading, language arts, physical education and science. One thing I like about distance learning is that I have lots of breaks between my classes.

Still, I would rather have school in person because I can do science labs. We can only do labs at school, in person, with the teacher helping us. ♦



PHOTO: SANDRA PYLVAINEN

Kate does distance learning on a laptop at the LLC office.

Current Spiritual Topics

At the May 2021, continent-wide LLC Meeting held in Monticello, Minn., LLC Board Chairman Jim Frantti kept a presentation in which he reviewed current spiritual topics. This article is written by Frantti based on his oral presentation.

Jim Frantti

THE LLC BOARD felt that it would be good at the beginning of our meeting to touch on a few spiritual topics. This is intended to touch on some very basic matters of how we believe and share some thoughts about them.

Justification

The question of how a person is found acceptable before God is a most fundamental question. How is it that we can be acceptable before God and can have the hope of one day reaching our eternal goal in heaven? This topic could deserve a lot of research, study of scripture and discussion. Yet, in my mind it becomes very simple. This question of justification was central at the time of the Reformation. Now as then, we believe that we are only justified by faith. The writer to the Hebrews said that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). Salvation is only by faith, only by God's grace, and only because by faith God sees in us the merits of His Son.

A person's own righteousness through knowledge or good works cannot make a person acceptable before God. We are saved only by faith, and we are righteous only by faith. We often speak about the righteousness of Christ that we own by faith. The only righteousness acceptable to God is Christ's. We do know, and the Bible teaches, that living faith is also accompanied by its fruits. Living faith is an endeavor, and it is accompanied by what we sometimes call the righteousness of life. We are not then speaking about righteousness through good works but the endeavor to keep faith and a good conscience.

The Office of the Holy Spirit

We believe in a Triune God – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They are three persons or forms in which God exists, but there is only one true God.

When we speak about the Holy Spirit, we are speaking about God. We are not speaking about some different phenomena or concept. It is the form in which God is present in His kingdom and in His children. Before He left from this earth, Jesus promised the sending of the Holy Spirit, which He called a teacher, a comforter and the Spirit of truth. We want to hold the understanding in our hearts that God's

Spirit is in His congregation, and it is a teacher, a comforter, and the Spirit of truth. God's Holy Spirit does not teach each of us our own way to believe. It is the Spirit of truth and unites us in understanding.

Jesus says of those who believe in Him that He and the Father will come and make their abode in them. Thus, God's Spirit dwells in each believer and speaks through the believers. It uses the mouths of the believers to speak, but it gives a message that is from God. That is why Jesus said more than once, "He that hath an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." I know that many of us have come here today with the prayer that God's Holy Spirit would speak here, and that God would give to every one of us hearing ears and hearts to receive what the Spirit says.

A question connected with the office of the Holy Spirit is, "How is a person sanctified, or made holy?" In the Christian world, there have been different views concerning the sanctification of the Word versus the sanctification of the Spirit. We esteem God's Word as our highest authority, and we examine all of our teachings according to God's Holy Word. However, Jesus said, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). Martin Luther described the work of the Holy Spirit in this way, that it calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies. It is clear how Luther believed the work of sanctification takes place.

Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:5,6). This does not mean that we diminish the treasure of God's printed Word. It is a treasure. We have always been encouraged in God's kingdom to read the Scriptures. God's Word is the foundation of all the work we do in God's kingdom. It is good to read the Bible, dear brothers and sisters, and to be familiar with it. However, reading and studying the printed Word cannot give life. The Spirit gives life. That is why it is written that faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). We need the hearing of the living Word to give faith and the power to believe. This does not in any way diminish the value of the printed Word, but it teaches us that it is the Spirit that gives life.

How often do we pray when we come to services that God's Holy Spirit would open the Word and give life? Luther said it more directly, "No man perceives one iota of what is in the Scriptures unless he has the spirit of God. All men have a darkened

heart so that even if they can recite everything in scripture and know how to quote it, yet they apprehend and truly understand nothing of it."

God gives the gift of faith not through reading, not through prayer, not through doing good deeds. It is a grace gift that comes through the hearing of His Word. Apostle Paul wrote, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Paul preceded those words by writing, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:14,15).

Thus, God, through the office of the Holy Spirit, calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies. Through the office of the Holy Spirit, God gives life through the living Word. The Holy Spirit is our teacher, our comforter, and our sanctifier. It is a Spirit of truth.

The Congregation of God

God's Word is our highest authority. It is our foundation. We are built upon the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20). God's Word is the authority according to which we examine the teachings of God's kingdom. This living Word is found in the congregation of God. That is where the Holy Spirit is found. Some translation of the Bible is used by every Christian church in the world, but where is the living Word found? God's congregation and the Word of God are inseparable. Juhani Raattamaa said in this way, "If you correctly understand God's Word, then the Word binds you to the congregation."

One of the things that makes God's congregation so dear to us is that it is where the living Word is. If we want to find encouragement, if we want to find comfort, if we want to find a place of forgiveness, we turn to fellow believers because the living Word is found in the fellowship of believers.

Luther said, "Where the Word is (which is the most important thing), there is the kingdom of God. Consequently all things are there: church, Christ, sacraments, ordination." He went on to say, "Neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on him, and obtain him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel."

The congregation of God is both visible and invisible. It is visible because it consists of people. It is invisible because it

is a spiritual fellowship. Luther said, "A child seven years old knows what the church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd." So the congregation of God has that visible aspect to it. It is present in our brothers and sisters. Of course, it is hidden by our sinfulness and our flaws. It is hidden from the world. So it is at the same time an invisible congregation. The prophet wrote in the Old Testament, "Thou art a God that hidest thyself" (Isa. 45:15).

When we realize that God's congregation is a spiritual fellowship and not a human or fleshly fellowship, it allows us to understand and believe that the congregation of God is unerring. It is the pillar and ground of truth (I Tim. 3:15). Does it mean that we don't err? No. Does it mean a group of believers don't err? No. Does it mean a board or a whole congregation cannot err? No. It means God's congregation on earth does not err. The truth is always found there, and it is being led by the Spirit on the path to heaven. That is why it is always our prayer that we can remain in the fellowship of God's congregation and in its unity. Because collectively the congregation does not err, even though individually and in small numbers we can and do err.

The congregation of God is our spiritual mother. Jesus was once speaking in a crowded place, and someone came to Jesus and said, "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren" (Matt. 12:47-49). God's kingdom is our mother. Apostle Paul repeats that teaching in the letter to the Galatians, "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26).

In the catechism, Luther described the congregation and unity of Spirit that rules there: "I believe that there is on earth a little flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet it is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word." This is a very familiar and very precious description of the congregation of God.

Forgiveness

Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to His own. Jesus gave two keys. When He gave

those keys to His disciples, He told them whatever they loose on earth is loosed in heaven, and whatever they bind on earth is bound in heaven (Matt. 16:19, John 20:23). God's congregation is quick to loose and slow to bind. The key of loosing happens when the gospel is preached and one is able to be freed from sin – is able to believe sins forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus. The key of binding happens in one sense when we as believers cannot accept those who are not traveling in this flock of believers. We cannot greet those who are on the outside of God's kingdom and must confess that we do not believe that they are on the way to heaven. In this way, they are bound in their own condition. We do not want to give them a false hope but rather to lovingly remind them that they are not traveling on the same road or path as we are. Binding can also happen in the way that Jesus described in His Church Law of Christ as the final and ultimate step if matters cannot be cared for in the congregation (Matt. 18:15–18). Both of the keys that Jesus has entrusted to His kingdom are, nevertheless, used in love.

How does a person receive forgiveness? Forgiveness happens through the preaching of the gospel – God's living Word. The living gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). It has the power to cleanse from sin. One elderly brother was once watching a brother who had just done some concrete work and was trying to clean his wheelbarrow. He had to use a special solvent. The older brother, watching this, said that the concrete is like sin: there is only one solvent that can clean the stain of sin from the conscience, and it is the blood of Christ. Through the blood of Christ, the living gospel has that kind of power that it can cleanse the stain of sin. In God's kingdom, we are fortunate that the gospel is so freely preached.

When Apostle Paul was speaking in the synagogue in Antioch, he said, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [speaking of Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." This encapsulates justification and forgiveness all in one statement. There were some Gentiles there that had heard this. They approached Paul and begged him that these same words could be preached to them the next Sabbath day. It was a precious message to them to hear that they could receive forgiveness of their sins through such a simple manner as the hearing and believing of the gospel.

God's children live under the continual protection of God's grace. We live every

We understand that confession is a grace privilege.

moment in that protection. Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, "We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:2). We need this protection of God's grace because we carry inherited sin, and it never leaves us. We can hear the gospel and believe it, and our sins are all forgiven. Yet we still carry this old portion, and we will until we are laid into the grave. Then this old portion returns to dust from which it was made. If we did not have the continual protection of God's grace, we would have no hope because we carry sin-corruption always.

God's grace also protects us as God's children in this way that when we fall into committed sin, whether by thought or word or deed, God does not cast us off. We don't lose faith every time we fall into sin. If that were the case, we would have no hope. We could never leave the place of repentance. God's grace protects us. It does not mean that we do not put away sin. As Apostle Paul wrote, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid" (Rom. 6:1,2). We want to care for our sins, and grace allows to do that. The writer to the Hebrews gives this encouragement, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

The encouragement or instruction to put away sin is found in many places in God's Word. In John 13, Jesus gave the teaching to His disciples to wash one another's feet. In the first letter to Timothy, chapter 1, there is the encouragement to hold faith and a good conscience. Hebrews 12 is where we are told that being encompassed about with this cloud of witnesses let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets. Revelations 7 speaks of the throng that came out of tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. There are many other places also that give us encouragement to put away sin.

Confession

Confession is founded on Scripture. When David had fallen into sin, he wrote, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:5). Apostle James wrote, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). In a familiar

portion from our communion rites, we hear, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We understand that confession is a grace privilege. It is not forced and not demanded. It is a privilege. It's for us to use when we feel the need, not because someone else is telling us we must. We confess of our own will. We do it because it is a gift given by God, and it helps us to travel free from the burden of sin.

In the Smalcald articles, it is written in this way: "Since absolution or the power of the keys, which was instituted by Christ in the gospel, is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church..." They valued the grace privilege then as we do now.

The Augsburg Confession reads in this way, "About confession, our congregations teach that private absolution is to be preserved in the congregations, although the enumeration of all sins is not essential in confession. It is even impossible according to the Psalmist: 'Who can discern his errors?'" (Ps. 19:12)." They valued this grace privilege, and we also want to keep it as a treasure that God gives us a way, as weak believers, to be freed from anything that troubles us.

The Catechism teaches that "Confession consists of two parts, and one is, that we confess our sins. The other is that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the confessor as from God himself, by no means doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven." Luther taught that forgiveness or absolution is the sweet part of confession. That is the part we long to hear. That is why we speak about our matters. Not because we are freed by just speaking about it, but we want to hear the message of forgiveness. Let us not make confession into some kind of work or demand, and let us not lose it as a grace privilege.

The gospel of forgiveness is just as effective in private confession as it is in public confession. We are not better because we confess something publicly. If we put the wrong emphasis on confession, there is a danger that we make it a merit by which we earn forgiveness. We never want to put that kind of emphasis or a demand on confession but always keep it as a privilege for believers to use if we feel the need. In God's kingdom we have always been taught that matters are corrected to the extent offense has been caused and often times private confession gives strength for this.

A brother once told me about his two young children, a brother and sister. They

got into a spat at home, and the sister was very hurt by what her brother did. She ran off to her bedroom crying. The father talked to his boy and told him, "You have hurt your sister's feelings, and you need to ask her forgiveness." The boy refused to go to his sister and said, "Dad, I want you to forgive me." The father told him, "It is not me you hurt or offended; it is your sister. You need to go take care of matters with her." Again the boy said, "No Dad, I want you to forgive me." This father continued, "Then I remembered what the Bible says. The gospel is the power, and I preached the gospel to my boy. Do you know what happened then? He ran to take care of matters with his sister!" The gospel gave the boy the power to do that. That is what happens often also in confession. It gives us power to care for our matters wherever they should be cared for, not because it is demanded of us, but because we want to be free with one another.

The Church Law of Christ

The instructions of Jesus in the so-called Church Law of Christ begin with these words: "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee" (Matt. 18:15). It is clear that the instructions of Jesus are for caring for offenses between brothers and sisters. Again we are taught that we care for matters in the smallest circle in which offenses have occurred. If the offense is between two believers, we try to take care of it just between the two of us. If the matter cannot be cared for that way, then we seek help, because the goal is that offenses can be forgiven.

There are also those matters that are not personal offenses but are public matters in the congregation. When matters affect the congregation, they are discussed in the congregation. Those who are serving before the congregation are cared for by the congregation. To me it is especially important if my service before the congregation is causing concern or confusion, I want my care to be in the congregation. If, on the other hand, I have said or done something to offend my brother, then I hope that brother would come and talk to me and not bring the matter to others first. So we care for matters in the smallest circle in which the offenses have taken place, always with the goal of forgiveness.

Servants of the Congregation

In the book of prophet Isaiah, we read, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night" (Isa. 62:6). We understand that in faith we are all in a place of watching. Jesus instructed all to watch (Mark 13:37). Our first place of

watching is in our own faith. We also are each other's helpers, and we watch over and help each other. It is true that God has given some a special duty to be watchmen on the walls of Zion. Their duty is to sound the trumpet if the enemy is approaching. Prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet" (Jer. 6:17). Through His congregation, God calls servants to special duties. In the same way, He can also free us from serving. If He decides that our time of serving is over for any reason, He can through the congregation ask us to sit. God does not owe us any explanation of why He calls and why He asks to sit. It is God's decision to do that.

Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about this that God has set some into special duties, and He speaks about the diversity of gifts and the diversity of duties (1 Cor. 12). Servants of the Word and the elders, or board members, have been given special duties in the kingdom. This does not elevate them but rather lowers them to a place of serving. Apostle Paul wrote, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last" (1 Cor. 4:9). Paul felt himself to be less than the least of all the saints (Eph. 3:8). When Paul met with the elders in Ephesus for what he thought would be the last time, he instructed them, "Take heed unto yourselves and unto all the flock over which God hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). He was instructing them to take heed over the spiritual needs of the flock. Such responsibilities that have been given to those who serve. Again, it does not elevate those who serve. Jesus once asked, "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat or he that serveth?" (Luke 22:27). The question has an obvious answer, but it is an important reminder.

How Do I See God's Kingdom?

I want to end with this question: I ask it of my own heart, and I hope you would ask it also in yours. How do I see God's kingdom? How does it look to you today? Do you see the pillar and ground of truth? (1 Tim. 3:15). Do you see a candlestick all of gold without blemishes? (Zech. 4:2). Do you see your spiritual mother? (Gal. 4:26). Do you experience it as righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost? (Rom. 14:17).

The writer of Hebrews wrote, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22). Is that how God's kingdom looks to us? My prayer, especially in these recent times, has constantly been, "Dear Heavenly Father, do not let me lose sight of the beauty of this kingdom. Let me remain in its unity and fellowship and care, because that is the only way I will get to heaven." In God's kingdom we who are weak in ourselves have the power of the gospel. It is God's power. ♦



ILLUSTRATION: SIRPA TUOMAALA

WHO WAS LYDIA? The women of the Bible were just as varied and interesting as women today. While most of the women that come to mind when we think of biblical times were mothers who worked in or near the home, there were also women living in many situations, specifically workers who helped forward God's message by giving time and monetary resources to apostles of the Word. One such woman was Lydia, a merchant of purple cloth, which was valuable at the time when Apostle Paul made his journeys, about 40 AD. Perhaps Lydia's business produced income which she was then able to use to benefit the early church.

In SRK's book *Raamatun naisia Eevasta Priscaan* (Women of the Bible from Eve to Priscilla), Ed. Marja-Liisa Sivula and Raili Ojalehto (SRK, 2011), we read that Lydia was the first European believer in Europe who was named in the book of Acts. In this excerpt, Johanna Lumijärvi tells of Lydia's meeting with Apostle Paul, and of her repentance.

The Meeting of Lydia and Apostle Paul

Johanna Lumijärvi

PAUL, WHO PREVIOUSLY PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS, made several missionary journeys with other apostles after his conversion to Christianity. There were altogether three missionary journeys to various destinations. The meeting of Lydia and Apostle Paul occurred early on the second missionary journey. Luke, the author of the Acts of Apostles, relates that the journeys of Paul or of other apostles did not always go according to plan, but rather the Spirit of God prevented a planned journey and directed them elsewhere. This is what happened also at the beginning of the second missionary journey. Paul and Timothy along with their companions first attempted to go to Asia Minor and then proceed to Bithynia. Since those plans were thwarted, they ended up in Troas on the Aegean Sea. While in Troas, Paul had a vision at night in which he was asked, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Paul and his companions set off and arrived in Philippi after a couple days.

On his missionary journeys, Paul usually went in each new city to the synagogue, to the site where Jews worshipped God. There it was good for him to proclaim the message of the risen Jesus. During a Jewish service any Jewish man could ask for the Bible scrolls and give a sermon on some text in the Old Testament. In Philippi, when it was the Sabbath day, Paul and his companions went to the riverside to find a place to pray, because the city did not appear to have a synagogue. If there had been even ten Jewish men, there would have been a synagogue. Ten males above the age of thirteen were required to hold a Jewish worship service. Paul knew that a site for a prayer meeting might be found on the shore of the river, because alongside running water it was easy to perform purification rites, for instance.

Luke relates, "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she received the message that Paul spoke." In this rudimentary way the Bible describes the most important event in the life of Lydia. Lydia believed the gospel proclaimed by Apostle Paul. ♦

Translation: Eeva Kariniemi

Lyydian ja Paavalin kohtaaminen

Johanna Lumijärvi

PAAVALI, JOKA OLI ENTINEN KRISTITTYJEN vainoaja, teki kristityksi käännyttyään lähetyamatkoja muutamien muiden apostolien kanssa. Eri puolille suuntautuneita matkoja oli kaikkiaan kolme. Lyydian ja Paavalin kohtaaminen ajoittuu toisen lähetyamatkan alkupuolelle. Apostolien tekojen kirjoittaja Luukas kertoo, etteivät Paavalin tai muiden apostolien omat suunnitelmat aina toteutuneet, vaan Jumalan Henki esti suunnitellun matkan ja ohjasi toisaalle. Näin kävi myös toisen lähetyamatkan alussa. Paavali ja Timoteus seuralaisineen yrittivät mennä ensin Aasiaan ja sitten Bityniaan. Suunnitelmien estyttyä he päätyivät Troakseen meren rannalle. Troaksessa Paavali näki yöllä näyn, jossa häntä pyydettiin: "Tule meren yli tänne Makedoniaan ja auta meitä." Paavali seurueineen lähti matkaan, ja he saapuivat parissa päivässä Filippiin.

Lähetyamatkoillaan Paavali meni yleensä uudessa paikassa synagogaan, juutalaisten jumalanpalveluspaikkaan. Siellä hänen oli hyvä julistaa sanomaa ylösnousseesta Jeesuksesta. Juutalaisessa jumalanpalveluksessa kuka tahansa juutalainen mies saattoi pyytää kirjakäärön ja pitää puheen jostakin Vanhan testamentin tekstistä. Filippiissä sapatin tultua Paavali tovereineen meni rantaan etsimään rukouspaikkaa, koska kaupungissa ei näyttänyt olevan synagoga. Jos Filippiissä olisi ollut kymmenenkin juutalaista miestä, siellä olisi ollut myös synagoga. Juutalaisen jumalanpalveluksen pitämiseen vaadittiin näet kymmenen yli 13-vuotiaista miestä. Paavali tiesi, että rukouspaikka saattaisi löytyä rannasta, koska virtaavan veden äärellä oli helppo suorittaa esimerkiksi puhdistumismenoja.

Luukas kertoo: "Sapattina menimme kaupungin ulkopuolelle joenrantaan; arvelimme, että siellä olisi rukouspaikka. Istuuduimme sinne ja puhuimme naisille, joita siellä oli koolla. Meitä kuuntelemassa oli myös muuan Lyydia, jumalapelkäävä nainen, joka oli kotoisin Tyatirasta ja kävi kauppaa purppurakankailla. Herra avasi hänen sydämensä ottamaan vastaan sen mitä Paavali puhui." Näin koruttomasti Raamattu ilmaisee tärkeimmän Lyydian elämässä tapahtuneen asian. Lyydia uskoi Paavalin julistaman evankeliumin. ♦

The Will of God is Always Best

Alena Hillukka

ON APRIL 25TH, we in the Flathead Valley, Montana, congregation were blessed with two new ministers, Dan Grangroth and Tom Kumpula.

Dan expressed to me how the experience has been for him thus far. “My thoughts and emotions have never been as complex as they were the weeks after being called to serve as a minister in God’s kingdom. During the days after the board had called me, I experienced emotions I never would have thought were possible. Once the shock and numbness wore off, I had overwhelming emotions that I could not control and still cannot explain. This then turned to desperation as I questioned how such a weak traveler with such little knowledge and understanding of Scripture could be called. The days leading up to the announcement to the congregation were the most difficult to bear, but once the announcement was made, I could feel the many prayers flood into my heart and carry me through to the next day on this journey. Although I still cannot understand and comprehend how I was chosen, and I continue to have a large sense of inadequacy, my heart remains full, feeling that I am carried in love and prayers in God’s kingdom. I will move forward in this

duty the only way that I can; that is with faith, trust and many prayers.”

Tom’s thoughts were similar: “These past few weeks have been difficult trying to accept that I could actually be a speaker. Many doubts about my knowledge of God’s Word, my ability to speak in front of the congregation, how we as a growing family can handle a duty like this, and many other thoughts come flooding to the surface. From the time that my name was brought to the congregation, to the ordination ceremony and even still, the outpouring of people reaching out from all of Zion to offer thoughts, prayers and support to both my wife and me has been both amazing and comforting to experience! We truly feel like we now know what it feels like to be carried in prayer by God’s children. While I still tremble at the thought of performing this duty, we trust that this is God’s will, which He revealed through the Holy Spirit to our board and congregation. I want to be a willing and obedient worker. We pray that God will continue to bless us and support us through His congregation as we start a new chapter in our lives.”

This past January, Greg Jacobson became our first minister here. Greg says that he “felt a great joy that God has answered prayers from this congregation that they would be given ministers. God has also answered my



PHOTO: MEGAN KUMPULA
Tom Kumpula



PHOTO: MARY GRANGROTH
Dan Grangroth

prayers that I would be given those who can share this duty with me here. Our God is a good God, and He knows all of our needs.”

SHZ 357 has come to mind often since receiving the gift of speakers in our congregation. Reading the words has filled my heart with gratitude. “The will of God is always best and shall be done forever; and they who trust in Him are blest, He will forsake them never. He helps indeed in time of need, He chastens with forbearing; they who depend on God, their Friend, shall not be left despairing.” God has answered the prayers of many here in Montana. We ask that our new speakers, their families and our congregation be remembered in love and prayer. ♦

MUSIC NOTES

Connecting with Rightsholders

Liisa Keranen

LAST MONTH I WROTE about copyrights and how we at LLC are doing our best to deal with them properly in order to ensure free and ethical use of our songs and hymns of Zion and the accompanying Chorale Book. It has been a lengthy process securing the rights to sing, play, record, broadcast, livestream, republish, arrange, revise and use our songs and hymns in videos. As I have gone about this work, I have had the opportunity to interact with many rightsholders in many countries. It is touching to find out that the songs we sing, their melodies and rhythms and words, are valued and beloved by many, not just by us members of the LLC.

I have contacted rightsholders to see if they’d agree to the additional rights we’re seeking, such as rights to stream and broadcast songs or publish them in videos. I began with the owners who have many songs in our book. Most of them have agreed to these rights either free of charge or with a minimal one-time payment. Sometimes it takes a lot of dialog with the owners to ensure the rights to use their work in the broadest possible way. I have gotten to know many of them through these emails and have learned many interesting facts from them. Many have been happy to hear their songs are being used, and they have sent God’s blessings and other nice greetings to the singing congregation here.

One way of finding these copyright owners is through obituaries. An example of this is in connection with *The Crystal Sea of Mercy*. When the *Siionin laulut* collection was revised in Finland in 2016, it saddened me to notice that this song had been removed from it. I saw an article about it in the *Päivämies*, stating the author had moved to the United States and they hadn’t been able to track him down to ask for permission to print the song. This prompted me to do some sleuthing, since this song is in our songbook as well. I found out the author of the song, Niilo Saastamoinen, was an ordained Finnish minister

who had moved to America. He served at a church in Cokato and lived his final years in Florida. I found his obituary which listed family members, and by methodically googling all those names, I located his granddaughter in southern California. She was very pleased to hear her grandpa had written a song.

I sent Saastamoinen’s granddaughter the words to his song, and she thought they were beautiful. When I sent her a recording of the song, however, she found it to be solemn and slow. She had never been to a Lutheran service, and she thought of her grandpa as an upbeat man, so I guess the song surprised her. I sent her the hymnal and we got to know each other through correspondence. She seemed very happy to be able to help this way. We also got rights to use this song for the SRK and SFC, so fortunately it can be included in the *Siionin laulut* in the future.

In other cases as well I have noted family connections in an obituary and then found my way to a family member of a song author. This has led me to people in several countries, including Finland and Sweden. It has been interesting to text someone in, for example, a small town in southern Sweden, asking if their grandpa wrote a certain hymn. All those I’ve contacted have been happy to help, and some haven’t even known that their relative wrote a song. If we have paid reimbursements for the rights, the intended uses of the payments have also varied a lot. One family uses the royalty money to take care of the grave of the author, some collect the money to use for family gatherings, and some want to direct it to a favorite charity.

There are quite a few songs on the *Do Not Webcast* list that is shown on the LLC website. Congregation music people should also have this list somewhere readily available so song leaders and organists can easily check whether a song they select is within our rights to sing at services that are broadcast online. Most of these songs are made by well-known authors or composers, and therefore they are represented by publishing houses. That’s why we have only had rights to sing the songs in

our living rooms or in events that are not leaving the walls of the room they’re sung in. Regrettably, some beloved songs are on that list. For some of these songs, the effort to secure broad rights to use them is ongoing.

I have contacted one particular company multiple times who referred us to local agencies that were unable to help. However, we recently broke through the impasse when the European agency finally realized we can’t get anywhere with local agencies. The company’s representative then offered to contract with us directly. She thanked us for wanting to ethically respect ownership of songs, and we were able to secure rights to twelve songs from the *Do Not Webcast* list by paying a very moderate one-time broadcasting rights payment. I am very excited about this development! The list is getting shorter. I am hoping that by keeping in continual contact with these other publication houses, we may secure broadcasting rights from them also.

Our efforts to manage our rights to use artistic works in an ethical manner continue. Because the hymnal has many connections to Finland and to believers and songwriters there, there are many links in this chain. I have concentrated on getting rights from original owners and publishing houses first. In addition, quite a few believers in the North American Zion have written songs in our current book, and even more people revised or translated songs from Finnish to English. Our plan is to get rights verified by everyone. The general thought has been that people who have wanted to translate or revise a song for our own book here have, in effect, wanted their work to be used for the benefit and uplifting of Zion.

The hymnal truly is a work-in-progress that carries many blessings. A unique aspect of this work is that it is never done; new songs are written or translated from other languages quite regularly. Over time, we will consider publishing supplements to our current hymnal. And one day – perhaps decades from now – it will be time to publish a new hymnal. ♦

2021 LLC Summer Services Online

JULY 1-4



“Be thou faithful unto death,
and I will give thee a crown of life.”
– Rev. 2:10

Information on this online event
is posted on our website
llchurch.org and on Facebook
and Instagram.

Join us there!

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.

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San Antonio, TX 78229-4905
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mhoikka@hotmail.com
Angela 623-337-0258
angela.hoikka@gmail.com

LCPL Huhta, Blake
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218-539-9941

L CPL Ryan Kako
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Camp Lejeune, NC 28547

Loren & Ashley Krey
PO Box 4724
Fort Eustis, VA 23604

Eric & Rosella Randall
2914 Gamewell Cir.,
Eastover, NC 28312

CPL Randall, John
Wpns Co. 1st Bn. 4th Mar 1st
MARDIV
Camp Pendleton, CA 92055

MIDN 2/c Nels Waaraniemi
PO Box 15141
Annapolis, MD 21412
njwaaraniemi@gmail.com
763-607-6973

SERVICE SCHEDULES

CANADA

ALBERTA

Lethbridge Laestadian Lutheran Church

Chairman: Allen Pirness 403-894-0515 | pirness@hotmail.com
Secretary: Kris Ylioja 403-308-6170 | kylioja@hotmail.com

Sept-May

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

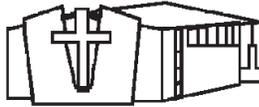
June-Aug

Sunday service 11:00 am

ONTARIO

Toronto Laestadian Lutheran Congregation

5579 Hwy 27, Cookstown, ON
Mailing address: PO Box 1035
Cookstown, ON, Canada L0L 1L0



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

Chairman: 416-688-5254 | Secretary: 905-936-6359
Church: 705-458-9568 (during services)

SASKATCHEWAN

Dunblane Laestadian Lutheran Church

Box 160, Macrone, SK
Canada S0L 2E0
Phone & fax: 306-243-4837
Chairman: 306-243-4407
Secretary: 306-243-4836



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

No Bible class or song services June, July and Aug.

Outlook Laestadian Lutheran Church

400 McKenzie St N
Outlook, SK Canada S0L 2N0
Phone: 306-867-8950
Chairman: 306-867-7530
Secretary: 306-867-9632
secretary.OLLCC@gmail.com
www.outlookllchurch.org



Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. —Matt. 11:28

Welcome to our services!

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

No Bible class or song services June, July and Aug.

Saskatoon Laestadian LUTHERAN CHURCH

Chairman: 306-343-1116 | saskatoonllc.org

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

UNITED STATES

ALASKA

Alaska Laestadian Lutheran Church

1341 E Sue Ln, Wasilla, AK 99654 | Chairman: 907-315-1197

Sunday school (during school year) 10:00 am
Sunday service 11:00 am
Bible class – Wednesday 7:30 pm
Song services – 1st Wednesday 7:30 pm

ARIZONA

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Glendale

Chairman: 623-556-6911 | Secretary: 623-810-2911

LLC of Glendale is holding services jointly with
Phoenix Laestadian Lutheran Church until further notice.
See the current service schedule at pllchurch.org

Please check the website for any location changes.
Website: <http://www.llcofglendale.org> | Email: info@llcofglendale.org

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Flagstaff

Meeting place: Sturgeon Cromer Elementary School
7150 Silver Saddle Road, Flagstaff, AZ 86004 | llcflagstaff.org

Sunday school 9:15 am | Sunday service 10:30 am

For visiting minister and communion service details, see online calendar.
Chairman: 612-741-7615 | Secretary: 602-885-3105

Phoenix Laestadian Lutheran Church

32424 N 43rd St, Cave Creek, AZ 85331
pllchurch.org | information@pllchurch.org
Chairman: 602-396-6929 | Secretary: 480-213-2201

Service Schedule

Phoenix Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:45 am
Glendale Sunday school (Sept–May) 6:00 pm
Sunday service 8:30 am, 11:00 am & 7:00 pm
(1st Sunday Communion at all services)
Wednesday: Bible study 7:00 pm
1st Wednesday: Song services 7:00 pm
Sunday service summer schedule 8:30 am & 11:00 am

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Prescott Valley

3120 Mountain View | PO Box 25517 | Prescott Valley, AZ 86312

Sunday school (Sept–May) 9:15 am
Sunday service (Communion–1st Sunday) 10:30 am
Wednesday–Bible class (except July) 7:00 pm

Church: 928-775-5030
Chairman: 928-445-0407 | Secretary: 928-533-3347

COLORADO

Laestadian Lutheran Church of the Roaring Fork Valley

1859 N 1st St | PO Box 681 | Silt, CO 81652
Chairman: 970-618-7752 | www.llcfrv.org

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

FLORIDA

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Florida

(Affiliated LLC Congregation)

Contact: Secretary – Russell Roiko 612-723-1422 or
Treasurer – Vesa Paukeri 954-294-6567

Service Schedule (English & Finnish)

Apr–Nov	Dec–Mar
At homes	Sunday–2:00 pm
Contact above	St. Andrews Lutheran Church
	928 South E St, Lake Worth

ILLINOIS

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Illinois

Chairman: 847-543-4121 | Secretary: 847-543-4121

Sept–May	June–Aug
Sunday school 10:00 am	Sunday services 10:00 am
Sunday services 10:45 am	

Communion service 1st Sunday of month
Bible class last Sunday of month

MICHIGAN



290 Fairground,
Plymouth, MI 48170
734-451-0500
www.dllchurch.org

Chairman: Briar Siljander 248-978-2982 | bsiljander@gmail.com
Secretary: Julie Honkala 248-224-1399 | juliehonkala@yahoo.com

	Sunday services 11:00 am (Communion on 1st Sunday)
SEPT–MAY:	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

Ishpeming Laestadian Lutheran Church

567 Washington St, Ishpeming, MI 49849 | 906-485-1791

Sunday (Sept–May)	Sunday (June–Aug)
Sunday school 9:45 am	Worship service 11:00 am
Worship service 11:00 am	6:30 pm

Communion service – First Sunday | No evening service – Last Sunday

Wednesday (Sept–Apr) Bible class 7:00 pm
Song service or discussion – First Wednesday

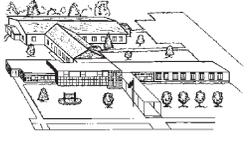
Pelkie Laestadian Lutheran Congregation

Church address: 15439 Pelkie Rd, Pelkie, MI 49958 | 906-353-7531
Mailing address: 22399 Broemster Rd, Chassel, MI 49916

Chairman: Albert Hongisto 906-482-0878
Secretary: Roy Pikkarainen 906-482-2166
Pastor: James Frantti 906-483-0712

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

MINNESOTA



Brainerd Laestadian Lutheran Church & Manor
 1501 S 8th St, Brainerd, MN 218-829-5745
 Chairman: 218-828-0536 | Secretary: 218-829-8055

Welcome to our services!

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)

Cokato Laestadian Lutheran Church
 16144-20th St SW, Cokato, MN 55321 320-286-2413



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

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Elk River
 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

Welcome to our services!

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.



Laestadian Lutheran Church of Menahga
 25 Juniper Ave NW, Menahga, MN 56464
 218-564-4064 | www.llcmenahga.org
 Chairman: 218-538-6583 | Pastor: 218-564-4702

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



Minneapolis Laestadian Lutheran Church
 13030 47th Ave N, Plymouth, MN 55442
 763-553-1601 | www.mllchurch.org
 general@mllchurch.org

Welcome to our services!

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



Laestadian Lutheran Church of Monticello
 1860 County Rd 39 NE, Monticello, MN 55362
 Chairman: 612-616-2252
 Secretary: 612-298-5095
 www.llcmonticello.org

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

Wolf Lake Laestadian Lutheran Church
 Wolf Lake, MN | 218-538-6708 | www.willchurch.org

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



Rockford Laestadian Lutheran Church
 741 Ibarra Ave NE, Buffalo, MN 55313
 763-497-8211

Sunday morning service..... 9:00 am & 10:30 am
 1st Sunday: Communion service
 Sunday school (Sept-May)..... 10:15 am
 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sunday evening services..... 6:30 pm
 1st Sunday: Finnish sermon
 4th Sunday evening youth discussion..... 6:30 pm
 Wednesday evening: Bible class..... 7:00 pm
 1st Wednesday: Song services*..... 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

MONTANA

Flathead Valley Laestadian Lutheran Church
 Meeting Place: East Side Grange - 27 Creston Rd, Kalispell, MT 59901
 Chairman: 406-309-4388 | Secretary: 406-314-2871

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

For visiting minister and communion service details, see online calendar at fvllchurch.org

NORTH DAKOTA

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Williston
 Meeting place: Zahl Community Center,
 3rd Street (west end of), Zahl, ND 58856

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: 928-499-9098

WASHINGTON

Longview Laestadian Lutheran Congregation
 PO Box 2795 | Longview, WA 98632-9635 | 360-425-7410

Service Schedule

Sunday school (Sept-May)
 1st-4th Sundays..... 9:15 am
 5th Sunday..... 5:15 pm
 1st Sunday: Communion service..... 10:30 am & 1:30 pm
 Youth discussion..... 6:30 pm
 2nd, 3rd & 4th Sundays: Service..... 10:30 am & 6:30 pm
 5th Sunday: Service..... 6:30 pm
 Wednesday: Bible class, Song service or service..... 7:00 pm

Website: llc-longview.org (Sunday 10:30 am service webcast)



Laestadian Lutheran Church of the North Sound
 Service Location: Highland Elementary
 3220 113th Ave NE, Lake Stevens, WA 98258
 Chairman: Paul Jacobson 425-280-4240
 website: llcns.org

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



Seattle Laestadian Lutheran Church
 22420 - 102nd Ave SE
 Woodinville, WA 98072
 www.seallc.org

Mailing address: PO Box 981, Monroe, WA 98272-4907

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

Laestadian Lutheran Church of Spokane
 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

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

Born to

Jake & Erica Plough
 Gillette, WY

A girl!

Darla Jean
 June 7, 2021



THE VOICE OF ZION

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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 Ruth DeLacey at rdelacey@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 Ruth DeLacey at rdelacey@llchurch.org

Ads must be submitted by the 1st of the month preceding the month of publication.



212 West 3rd Street, Monticello, MN 55362
 Mailing Address: PO Box 1607, Monticello, MN 55362
 763-479-2422 | info@llchurch.org | Office hours: 8:00-4:00 M-F

LAESTADIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Chairman: Visit the LLC website at: www.llchurch.org
 Jim Frantti
 home: 906-483-0712
 jfrantti@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

Memories from 40 Years Ago

The First Confirmation School Camp at Stony Lake in 1981



PHOTO: LLC ARCHIVES

This confirmation class and staff was the first of many to pose as a class in front of the Stony Lake camp building.

Ruth (Fredrickson) DeLacey, 1981 confirmation student

IT WAS THE SAME BACK THEN as it is today. As confirmation students arrived at camp for the very first time, they felt the gamut of feelings from fear to excitement and back again. This was 1981, the first year for camp as we know it. In addition to a novice support staff, it was also the first time for teachers to teach in at camp setting and the first time for the students to attend a camp. As we navigated the two-week confirmation camp together, we felt God's blessings for this opportunity that thereafter became an annual LLC event. Here are some memories people shared who attended the first confirmation camp forty years ago:

Phil Jurmu, student:

I remember the excitement of being together with staff and students for two

weeks without having to go to homes for the nights. As a fifteen-year-old I took a lot for granted, but in retrospect I marvel at God's blessings in arranging the nationwide camps. At that time, if I remember correctly, Canadians went to camp every other year. I was disappointed that the Canadians our age were not at the camp. I had met some Canadians our age at summer services in Canada a short time before.

Debbie (Johnson) Karvonen, counselor:

I felt anticipation, excitement and trepidation beforehand, knowing that this was the first camp to be held. A question in my mind and heart was should I be there? How can one so poor as I counsel these young in faith matters?

During the camp, we formed friendships, some which have continued to this day. We experienced a oneness of spirit

between teachers, directors and the big brothers and big sisters and felt a thankfulness to God for His abundant blessings during the camp and for blessing the Zion of America with a beautiful facility. I left hoping that I would somehow be able to serve in future camps. (I worked five years of confirmation camp at Stony, 1981–85. Peter Nevala coined the phrase "staff infection"). To this day, I encourage those who can, to serve at camps. It is such a humbling, wonderful, warm experience.

Sarah (Laulainen) Jurmu, student:

Confirmation was my first experience away from home and together with a bunch of believers to learn more about our faith. I remember going with excitement, yet with a little fear, not knowing what to expect. We spent two full weeks at Stony learning about God's Word. The days were long with only breaks at mealtime.

After our meals we all would flock to our volleyball court, which in today's time wouldn't be considered a court, but a little clearing with the net strung from one tree to the other. It felt like heaven on earth to spend all that time with so many believers enjoying confirmation lessons.

Keith Waaraniemi, counselor:

I hesitantly applied to serve at camp. I remember how exciting it was to be a counselor or "big brother" and teacher at the first confirmation school at our very own Stony Lake Camp. A couple months prior I had been installed as a minister and previously had never been at camp. I didn't know what to expect. I apprehensively and timidly did those tasks requested of me, and I received much more than I could give. Everything was new, the camp itself and the confirmation school format. We even had an overhead projector, a novel

The Purpose of Confirmation Camp

Carol Anderson, Peggy Hillstrom, Judy Davison and Kelly Lassila

Adapted from August 1981 Voice of Zion

THE REASON FOR CONFIRMATION SCHOOL is to get a better understanding of the matters of the kingdom of God. Also, the camp setting allows us to meet new people from different congregations. Confirmation school teaches us about God's Word and doctrine which we will confirm as our personal faith. Then when we confess our faith to unbelievers, we have a better understanding of our faith to explain our beliefs.

It is Jesus' command to teach those who wish to believe. Jesus says in Matthew 28:19,20 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." To be confirmed means we have a basic understanding of our faith, and we have made a promise to believe.

At this Stony Lake Confirmation Camp, we have learned about many things that we had heard of but didn't understand before coming here. We are glad we could come to this confirmation camp that God has provided. ♦

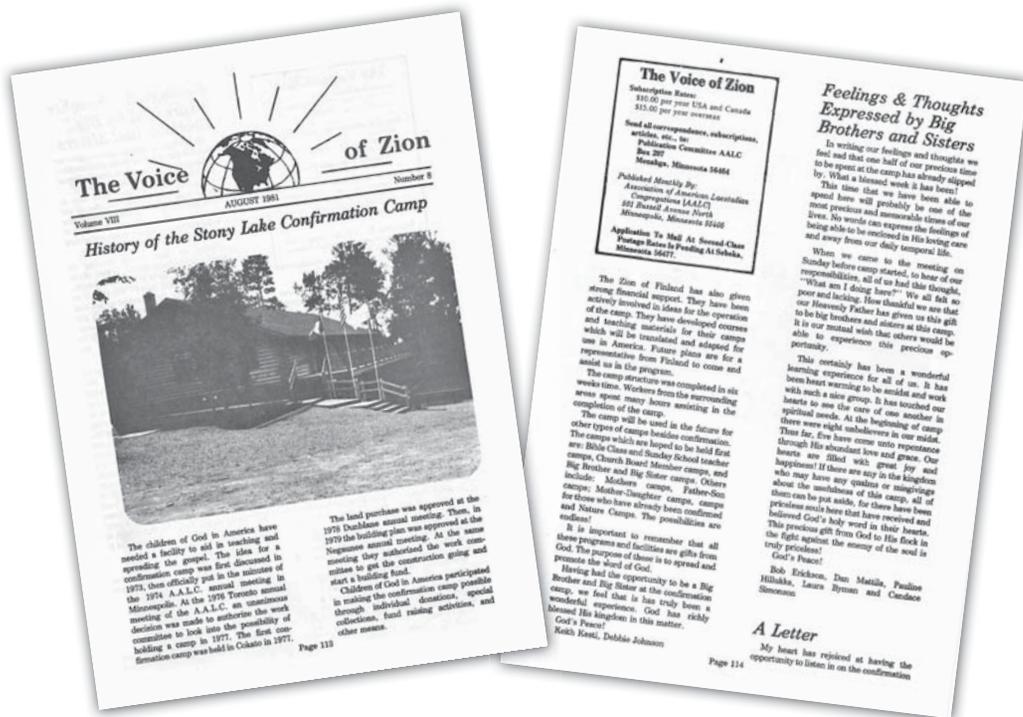


PHOTO: LLC ARCHIVES

Forty years ago, confirmation camp signaled a new era. The August 1981 issue of the *Voice of Zion* was almost entirely written by camp staff and students.

teaching tool in the work of the kingdom at the time! Yet the teaching of the Word was age old, simple and comforting. I can still feel the warm camaraderie among staff. Friendships developed at camp that became lifelong. Many of us got "staff infection" and served together at camp in the decades that followed.

Andy Kesti, student:

As I was growing up in the Minneapolis congregation, I saw that my parents had often hosted students when the confirmation school was in our area. I became familiar with how confirmation operated while hanging out with some of the students who stayed at our house. In the years leading up to my confirmation, I wondered where I would stay. Would it be at my own house? That would be fine, but I really wanted to stay somewhere else. It seemed like it would be so much more fun! When it was announced that ours

would be the first confirmation camp to be held at Stony Lake, I was unsure what that meant. Would it be better or worse or the same as the confirmations I was familiar with while watching from the sidelines? When we exited the bus and got set up in the dorm, I knew this experience would be better than anything I could have ever imagined. I felt God took care of me there and I found people I was comfortable hanging around with. The two weeks flew by, and it has been only a memory for forty years. What has amazed me, is the connection I continue to feel with fellow confirmation students. I have said many times over the years that "I went to confo with them," or recently, "I went to confo with your parents!" Even last summer I served at a confirmation camp with someone I went to confirmation with in 1981. We truly are blessed! ♦



PHOTO: JAKE MUHONEN

Musicians love a big game of bump at the basketball hoops.

Why Do I Go to Camp?

Bekkah Simonson and Ruth DeLacey

WE ARE CELEBRATING our 40th camp season. Numerous camps have happened in the 40 years in many locations – confirmation camps, youth camps, mothers' camps, music camps, mother-daughter and father-son camps, veterans camp and the list goes on. Why do people go to camp? Why do you go to camp?

We heard answers to these questions from some who attended the Adult Music Camp that took place at Stony Lake Camp in Minnesota the weekend of April 23–25. Participants at this camp included confirmation-age youth to adults in their 40s.

Cole Jurmu, Nina Moll and Patti Johnson all agreed they came to get away from the daily cares of life and agreed it is a welcome break to go to camp! Their interest in singing and music was what brought them all together.

Besides singing and making music, they enjoyed recreational activities all weekend long, from volleyball at the volleyball court, to bump at the basketball hoops, to roasting hotdogs around the campfire near the outdoor chapel.

On Saturday evening, a music program presented new songs, tips and techniques learned during the day. This program became the camp highlight for some campers; for others the highlights were new friends and spending the whole weekend with believers.

The adult music camp comes highly recommended to anyone who enjoys music and likes to sing, no matter your skill level. Music has a way of drawing people together – wouldn't it be fun to join them?

What interests do you have? Could there be a camp around your interest? Please take a minute to answer the question of the month: "What kinds of camps should we hold that aren't offered yet?" ♦



PHOTO: BEKKAH SIMONSON

Singing around the campfire is a highlight.

We Can Rely on God's Guidance

Joshua Laho

IT HAS BEEN SEVEN YEARS since the summer of 2014, when I moved from Minnesota to Finland with no plans other than to marry my best friend and move into a small apartment. I moved here so Miia could finish her schooling in social work. While Miia was finishing her thesis, I attended the local Finnish language class for immigrants. I interacted with other immigrants and received peer support from them. After Miia graduated from school, she started working as a school social worker in Iisalmi until the birth of our firstborn.

After some time passed, a believing man came up to me at services and asked if I was available to help him at work doing bathroom and sauna remodeling since he was swamped. I was willing to help him, since I wanted to learn the trade as well. I signed up for the construction apprenticeship program with him for two years. I did my assignments and essays and attended courses a few hours a week in Finnish. I showed my instructor at the jobsite how to do various stages of construction interior work. Although I work on all stages of building from foundations to roofing, I especially enjoy the detailed and particular carpentry projects.

I continued working with the same company after finishing school, so we settled in a small town of Vieremä near Iisalmi, where we bought a house after renting it a couple years. We wanted to be nearby Miia's relatives and family and liked the small town feel with countryside landscape.

God has blessed us with four children, two boys and two girls. We are living the busy family life with little children as I work during the day and Miia as a stay-at-home mom. We enjoy our time as a family backpacking, biking, cross-country skiing in the neighboring fields, sliding, nature walks and exploring Vieremä. A neighboring sand and gravel pit a half mile down the road is our kids' playground. On the other side of the mound is a pine forest. Often, we climb up through the woods, stopping to pick blueberries and lingonberries and enjoying the views at the top of the mound.

We spend our Sundays as a family before attending Sunday school and services in the afternoon. We are members of the Iisalmi Rauhaniyhdistys congregation where I serve in the bookstore and Miia serves coffee lunch around three times a year. Iisalmi is a small congregation existing of about two hundred members.

We enjoy the variety of Finnish weather the whole year long. The short and dark days of the late fall and Christmas time has a magical touch, although it can be gloomy sometimes. We especially enjoy the late winter days when the days get longer and the sunlight reflects brightly off the snow. With the sun on our backs, Miia's brothers and I feel warmth



PHOTO: NOORA MYLLYNEVA

The Laho family, Josh and Miia, Lillian, Stefan, Avelia and Lennart at their home in Vieremä.

while ice-fishing. The summertime provides opportunity for night fishing on the lake or river. We also appreciate the long summer days with the midnight sun when we rough-it at my in-laws' rugged log cabin on the lake. The cabin, saunas and a few other buildings are handmade by my father-in-law. A natural spring is nearby the cabin where we scoop water into buckets for drinking water and cooking food. It is one of our favorite places because it has everything we need to unwind. Time stops while we are there.

God has guided my life up to this moment. The beginning of my time here had its unknowns, but with God's help I found my way. Our life is here in Finland for now, and we can trust that God will continue to guide our life. We remember the dear ones at my childhood home in Minnesota.

Faith is the same no matter where you are. The sermons and the gospel are the same although in different languages. This brings comfort to me and my family as we live in this country. ♦



PHOTO: MIIA LAHO

Josh and children pick blueberries on their walk to the mound.



PHOTO: JOSHUA LAHO

The sun sets at the cabin.