



MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN

‘If I should die before I wake’

By Rev. James Walter

Pastor, Grace, Little Rock
Mid-South District Second Vice-President

Alleluia! Christ Is Risen.

He Is Risen Indeed. Alleluia!

St. Paul writes:

“Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’
‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Cor. 15:51-57

As Christians, we are Easter people who rejoice in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. For us the season of Easter is a time of celebrating that God kept His promises to us, sent His only Son to bear our sin and be our Savior. Through His



“Teach me to live that I may dread The grave as little as my bed. Teach me to die that so I may Rise glorious at the awe-full day.”

**(“All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night”
LSB #883, stanza 3)**

suffering and death, the debt of our sin has been canceled and through His empty tomb we are assured that He is the firstborn among many who will follow unto eternal life.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to my parents for taking me to the font where I was made a child of God and an heir of everlasting life in the waters of Holy Baptism. What a tremendous inheritance is mine! Grafted onto the vine who is Jesus

Christ, they continued to make sure that my faith was nourished by regular worship and Sunday school participation. Both of my parents taught Sunday school, sang in the choir and were involved in other ways in the life of my home congregation, thereby showing me how to serve using my gifts and talents.

Growing up, my mother would tuck me and my brothers in at night using the familiar prayer, “Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep.” Then we would sing “Jesus Loves Me.” I am sure at some point we all wondered what “if I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take” meant. Actually it was during a Sunday service that I learned one day I would die. Maybe I was tuned in as a little one to something the pastor was preaching that particular Sunday and I came to the realization that one day I and those who were near and dear to me would die. The Good News is that in similar fashion I also learned that I would be given the gift of eternal life. This is our Easter triumph, Easter joy! Each and every Sunday as we gather around Word and Sacrament we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection is also our resurrection.

Because death is our enemy, we really don’t like to talk about it, do we? In fact, that same prayer my mother prayed with me every night had different wording from what my wife and I prayed with our children: “Guard me, Jesus, through the night, and wake me with the morning light.” Maybe that is a little less frightening for children. Yet it still focuses one’s trust and hope on Jesus. In fact, I was fortunate enough to be with my son and daughter-in-law recently as they were tucking in my oldest granddaughter with

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Broadcast offers hope to Venezuelan mother

Maria was born in Barinas, Venezuela, and raised by a poor family as her parents had no way of giving her a good education. When she was 16, she met an older man who was serving in the military. She was immediately attracted to his good looks and kindness toward her. Despite their age difference, they got married a few months later and Maria was excited to finally put poverty behind her.

Two months after her marriage, Maria became pregnant and was thrilled to be starting a family. However, to her surprise, the news about becoming a father did not please her husband. He began going out more often and drinking to excess. His return home always led to arguments and verbal abuse directed toward Maria.

Months went by until the day of birth arrived, and Maria found herself at home alone. Her neighbors drove her to the hospital, where she gave birth to a boy. When she called her husband to tell him about their son's birth, he refused to come to the hospital to visit them. This

was the final straw in their relationship; Maria decided to leave her husband and ask for a divorce.

This decision did not improve Maria's life. She became afraid of falling in love with another man (or potentially getting married again) and tried to find comfort with many different men who just made her feel lonely and empty inside. In addition, she felt like a failure as a mother and fell into a deep depression.

Maria was starting to believe that life was not worth living until one day she heard an encouraging message on a radio station that said, "Dear God. You who are our Father, help me with this deep loneliness that I have." This message had a tremendous impact on her and she immediately called the phone number that was given at the end of the program. She got in contact with staff from Lutheran Hour Ministries—Venezuela, who listened as she talked about her problems and offered encouragement through prayers and biblical teachings that greatly nourished Maria's spiritual life.

Today, Maria has an optimistic outlook

on her life. "Thanks to hearing about the Good News from my brothers and sisters of Lutheran Hour Ministries, my son is blessed to now have a mother who is completely happy and devoted to God."

It has been said that more than 90 percent of the world's population has access to radio — and radio can cross borders and reach into the homes, workplaces and cars of people almost anywhere. This is one of the main reasons why radio continues to be an important strategy for LHM to connect with the unreached in more than 50 nations.

In addition to broadcasting short radio messages, LHM—Venezuela's evangelistic activities address everyday problems through outreach tools like Christian literature, films and lectures, youth resources and a Bible course aimed at connecting individuals with congregations.

To learn more or support Lutheran Hour Ministries and its 80,000 members serving more than 50 countries, visit lhm.org or call 800-944-3450.

MESSAGE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

that very prayer. Each generation has a responsibility of sharing the faith with the one that follows, and what a joy it was for me to see that in action.

Yet "If I Should Die Before I Wake" gives me an opportunity to ask if you have shared what that will mean with those whom you love. Do you discuss with them what needs to take place? While our hope is that this will not happen, the reality is that it most certainly could. How often have you thought or said about your passing, "I just hope that I lie down and go to sleep and the Lord comes to take me to be with Him?"

But what about your loved ones? Will they know what to do? Have you made your funeral arrangements? I feel this time is a great opportunity for caring and sharing. We should not discount

that friends and co-workers, past and present, are affected by our loved one's passing.

Does your pastor know your favorite hymns and Scripture passages for your funeral? You will be buried by the church, won't you? What a great opportunity for those who survive to hear the Good News that you were given to believe. This is an opportunity to share and give witness to your faith after your death!

Do you even have a will? If you don't, the state has one for you. The state will not have a will that has a Christian preamble that speaks of the victory that comes through our Lord Jesus Christ. What an excellent opportunity for you to remind your surviving spouse, children and grandchildren and maybe even great-grandchildren that you lived in the forgiveness of a gracious and merciful God and Lord whom you now behold face to face.

Maybe you taught your children the

faith as they grew up, yet they have put it aside. That indeed happens, but you still have a voice, even from your final resting place, that you believe that you will be raised imperishable on the Last Day and that you earnestly desire to spend eternity with them before the throne of God, worshipping the Lamb.

In your will, have you remembered to share from the blessings the Lord has bestowed upon you, in a small or large way, with the congregation you attend and/or another ministry of the church? Certainly you wish to provide for your heirs and that is most commendable. I do too, but remember that you can still help fulfill the Great Commission even from the grave for the generations that follow.

If I should die before I wake, or if I should die in any other way, I have the assurance that in Christ I have been given the victory. My family has that assurance as well. This is something to think, talk and give thanks about.

Thrivent recognized for ethical practices — again

Thrivent Financial announced in March that it has been recognized again by the Ethisphere Institute, a global leader in defining and advancing the standards of ethical business practices, as a 2017 World's Most Ethical Company®.

The designation recognizes those organizations that have had a material impact on the way business is conducted by fostering a culture of ethics and transparency at every level of the company.

For six consecutive years, Thrivent's commitment to operating with ethical business standards and practices has been highlighted by this honor. This continued recognition ensures long-term value to members, employees, suppliers, regulators and investors. Thrivent is one of only seven companies in the Financial Services category honored this year.

"Thrivent lives out its mission of helping Christians be wise with money and live generously every day in the ways they manage their business, serve their mem-



bers, invest in their communities and engage with their employees," said Timothy Erlich, Ethisphere's chief executive officer. "Congratulations to everyone at Thrivent for being recognized as a 2017 World's Most Ethical Company."

The World's Most Ethical Company assessment is based upon the Ethisphere Institute's Ethics Quotient® (EQ) framework, which offers a quantitative way to assess a company's performance in an

objective, consistent and standardized way. The information collected provides a comprehensive sampling of definitive criteria of core competencies, rather than all aspects of corporate governance, risk, sustainability, compliance and ethics.

Scores are generated in five key categories: ethics and compliance program (35 percent), corporate citizenship and responsibility (20 percent), culture of ethics (20 percent), governance (15 percent) and leadership, innovation and reputation (10 percent); and are provided to all companies who participate in the process.

The full list of the 2017 World's Most Ethical Companies can be found at ethisphere.com/worlds-most-ethical/wme-honorees.

Thrivent is looking for talented individuals to join the organization. Those interested in a career with Thrivent should visit thrivent.com/careers.

Students: apply now for financial aid

Students who plan to attend an LCMS seminary or college/university during the 2017-18 academic year in order to prepare for full-time church work may apply for financial aid through the Mid-South District office. Financial aid amounts are granted for a period of one year, and a new application must be made each year.

Applications for the coming school year must be postmarked by June 15, 2017.

For forms, please contact the district office by phone (toll-free) at 866-373-1343, by email to jtyler@mid-southlcms.com, or by postal mail to 1675 Wynne Road, Cordova, TN 38016.



LCMS/Errik M. Lunsford

Congregation mission commitment receipts as of Feb. 28, 2017 (2 months)

Anticipated amount (16.67% of budget)	\$262,191
Actual receipts	246,585
Over (under) anticipated amount ...	(\$15,606)
Use of mission commitment receipts	
Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$69,809
Allocated to Tanzania	4,167
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	172,610
Total receipts	\$246,585
Mission commitment receipts comparison	
Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2017	\$246,585
Actual receipts as of Feb. 28, 2016	\$264,993
Over (under) prior year receipts	(\$18,408)

Understanding the 95 Theses

By Dr. Jack Kilcrease

Member, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

To understand the 95 Theses, we must first examine the nature of indulgences. According to Roman Catholic theology, within the process of confession and absolution there is a distinction between “eternal punishment” and “temporal punishment” due to sin. All sin is worthy of damnation (i.e., eternal punishment). When a person comes to confess their sins, the priest questions them regarding whether or not they are genuinely repentant. If they are, then the priest is to absolve them. Through absolution he makes the sinner free of eternal punishment.

Nevertheless, in spite of the sinner being free from eternal punishment, he is still subject to temporal punishment. Temporal punishment is simply the temporary suffering that all sin merits irrespective to forgiveness. If a person possesses heartfelt sadness at having violated the will of God (what Roman Catholic theology calls “contrition”), they will have already partially fulfilled the temporal punishment due to their sin. If they are merely repenting because they fear God’s judgment (what Roman Catholic theology calls “attrition”), then they will be subject to the full weight of temporal punishment.

In order to fulfill temporal punishment due to sin, the priest assigns penance after he has absolved the believer of sin. The priest decides how much penance to assign on the basis of an educated guess regarding the level of contrition experienced by the sinner. The more contrition the sinner feels (as opposed to mere attrition), the less penance should be assigned. To the extent that the sinner does not complete

all penance given to him, or the priest makes a mistake regarding how much penance should be assigned, the sinner will have to endure the sufferings of purgatory in the next life to fill in the deficit.

Indulgences were invented partially as a way to solve the problem of the inexact nature of penance. Because the pope has access to the “Treasury of Merits” (i.e., the great reserve of the merits of Christ and the saints), he can release people from the need to perform penance whenever he so chooses. This power extends to this life as well as the next (i.e., purgatory). He can do this by attaching a promise of indulgence to any action a sinner might take. By the time of the Reformation, the pope had attached this promise of the abrogation of penance to the payment of a fee. The pope also decreed that people could make a payment for their dead relatives in purgatory, thereby shortening their sufferings.

The specific occasion of the outbreak of the indulgence controversy was Johann Tetzel’s sale of indulgences in northern Germany. This sale was authorized by Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz and Pope Leo X. Albrecht had recently paid the pope to make him archbishop of the region. In order to repay the loan

Albrecht received to cover the bribe, the pope offered him the option of allowing the sale of indulgences in his region of Germany and splitting the profits with the Vatican. Specifically, the papacy was interested in selling indulgences at this time as a way of paying for the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

Although indulgences were not sold in Saxony, many people in Wittenberg traveled to the nearby regions and purchased them.

In the 95 Theses, Luther’s response to indulgences was several fold. First, it must be understood that at this point Luther’s teaching on justification was not completely developed and so at first he did not reject the very idea of indulgences, as he later would. Instead, Luther argued that the Latin Bible (also called the Vulgate translation) had improperly translated Matt. 3:2, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” as “Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” According to Luther’s interpretation, Jesus did not mean that people were obliged to perform penance. Instead, what Christ taught was that possessing an attitude of genuine contrition was central to the Christian life. The Church could prescribe the outward means through which one could express that inner contrition (i.e., penance), and even abrogate the necessity of employing those means (i.e., indulgences). Nevertheless, the Church could not circumvent the command of Christ by telling believers that by merely paying a fee that they need not feel genuine contrition for their sins.

Lastly, Luther argued that the pope does not have any power over purgatory. If we believe that the pope does, argued Luther, it raises the uncomfortable question of



why he does not simply empty purgatory for the sake of mercy rather than demanding a fee.

Although Luther’s criticisms of indulgences in the 95 Theses stand at variance with his later Reformation theology, the document remains an important witness to a stage in the Reformer’s thinking. The posting of the 95 Theses gave rise to a series of debates which caused Luther to radically rethink the doctrine of confession and absolution. As a result of these debates, Luther eventually came to recognize the free grace of God in the unconditional promise of the Gospel.

For more information, visit lutheran.reformation.org, a site co-sponsored by the LCMS, the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, (LCEF) and Thrivent Financial Foundation.

The site is filled with great resources for you to use, including:

History Resources

- ▶ interactive timeline
- ▶ digital library
- ▶ historic documents
- ▶ maps
- ▶ bulletin inserts

Worship materials for

- ▶ congregations
- ▶ music leaders
- ▶ pastors

Teaching tools

- ▶ study guides
- ▶ student materials
- ▶ videos
- ▶ teacher materials
- ▶ classroom competitions and social media

Did you Know?



The Martin Luther statue in Wittenberg, Germany.

- ▶ Martin Luther, born in 1483, was one of 10 children born to a successful German businessman and began learning reading, writing and Latin at age 5.
- ▶ He attended Germany’s top university, University of Erfurt, studied arithmetic, astronomy, geometry and philosophy, and attained a Master’s degree from the school in 1505.
- ▶ Although his father wanted him to be a lawyer, legend has it that when Luther was 21, he barely escaped being struck by lightning — he considered his deliverance a sign from God and abandoned his study of the law to enter an Augustinian monastery.
- ▶ He received his doctorate and became a professor of biblical studies in 1512.
- ▶ The 95 Theses, which became the foundation of the Protestant Reformation, were written in a humble, academic tone, questioning rather than accusing. Titled “A Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences,” the theses were intended as points for discussion and debate, rather than an angry act of rebellion.
- ▶ Although there were 95 theses, the last 93 largely supported the proposition he expressed in the first two: That God intended believers to seek repentance; and that faith alone, and not deeds, would lead to salvation, which only God could bestow by divine grace.
- ▶ Although the 95 Theses were posted on Oct. 31, 1517, it took nearly three years for Pope Leo X to conclude that Luther’s theses were heretical, and issue the papal bull (public decree) that led to Luther’s famous refusal to recant: “Here I stand. God help me. I can do no other.”
- ▶ Excommunicated by the pope and banished by the Holy Roman emperor, Luther lived under the protection of a local prince for 10 years in Wartburg Castle while he worked to translate the Bible from Latin and Greek into German, making it accessible for the first time to everyone, not just clergy and scholars — a revolutionary concept in his day.
- ▶ Luther found no basis in the Bible for the Church’s adherence to clerical celibacy, and in 1525 he married Katherine of Bora, a former nun. They had five children.
- ▶ In 2004 archeologists discovered Luther’s lavatory, which was remarkably modern for its day, featuring a heated-floor system and a primitive drain.
- ▶ Luther’s central teachings — that the Bible is the central source of religious authority and that salvation is reached through faith and not deeds — shaped the core of Protestantism and have had far-reaching effects: Where once the Catholic faith was virtually the only religion of Europe, today there are more than 41,000 different Christian denominations worldwide, according to History.com.

Pancake sales to benefit Haitian children

The Thrivent Action Team of Concordia Lutheran Church, Nashville, hosted its annual Shrove Tuesday pancake supper, serving pancakes and sausages to more than 70 people. Donations totaling \$1,200 will support the Trinity/HOPE feeding program for schools in Haiti.



Lenten drama presented at Faith

The Ash Wednesday service at Faith featured, from left, Michael Elling as an investigating reporter, with the Rev. David Lampman as "the Thorn," and Leo Bennett, age 3, as "Best Boy."

The Lenten service on Ash Wednesday at Faith Lutheran Church, Union City, Tenn., included a live sketch of "The Thorn." It is part of a series, "Silent Witnesses," based on the work of D. Scott Hewes.

The series is comprised of a set of homilies written in 1989. An investigating reporter tracks down witnesses to the crucifixion of Jesus and gets their perspective of what actually took place in Jerusalem on Good Friday.

"The Thorn" is based on John 19:1-3.

CLASSICS OF WORSHIP

FROM THE 1941 LUTHERAN HYMNAL

O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold (#260) Lyrics: Martin Luther, 1523

O Lord, look down from heav'n, behold
And let Thy pity waken;
How few are we within Thy fold,
Thy saints by men forsaken!
True faith seems quenched on ev'ry
hand,
Men suffer not Thy Word to stand;
Dark times have us o'ertaken.

With fraud which they themselves invent
Thy truth they have confounded;
Their hearts are not with one consent
On Thy pure doctrine founded.

While they parade with outward show,
They lead the people to and fro,
In error's maze astounded.

May God root out all heresy
And of false teachers rid us
Who proudly say: "Now where is he
That shall our speech forbid us?
By right or might we shall prevail;
What we determine cannot fail;
We own no lord and master."

Therefore saith God, "I must arise,

The poor My help are needing;
To Me ascend My people's cries,
And I have heard their pleading.
For them My saving Word shall fight
And fearlessly and sharply smite,
The poor with might defending."

As silver tried by fire is pure
From all adulteration,
So through God's word shall men endure
Each trial and temptation.
Its light beams brighter through the
cross,
And, purified from human dross,
It shines through every nation.

Defend Thy truth, O God, and stay
This evil generation;
And from the error of its way
Keep Thine own congregation.
The wicked everywhere abound
And would Thy little flock confound;
But Thou art our Salvation.

INSTALLATIONS



The Rev. Paul J. Bushur was installed as senior pastor of First Lutheran Church, Chattanooga, Tenn., on Sunday, March 12. Clergy who attended are, from left, the Revs. Dr. Ed Rosser, Josh Woodrow, Chris Sheets, Clifford Herd, Dr. Roger Paavola, Bushur, Mark Rhoads, Barry Hildebrandt, Gilbert Pinge and John Schulz. Bushur arrived in Chattanooga after 18 years as senior pastor of First Lutheran Church, Knoxville, Tenn.



The installation of the Rev. Bruce Hanson, right, as pastor of First Lutheran Church, Blytheville, Ark., was held on March 5. Pictured with Hanson is the Rev. Dr. Roger Paavola, Mid-South District president.

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, FORT WAYNE, IND.

Opportunities to learn, explore

CTSFW Continuing Education offerings for both church workers and laypeople begin in May and run through August in more than 20 locations from California to Iowa to North Carolina. Topics include:

- ▶ "Christianity in Conflict,"
- ▶ "Liturgy: Yesterday, Today and Forever,"
- ▶ "Are Today's Ears Hearing the Timeless Message?" and more.

The courses are taught by members of the CTSFW faculty as well as LCMS pastors and theologians. For a complete listing of locations and topics, visit ctsfw.edu/CE.

Musician Workshops at CTSFW Basic Level Organists and Service Playing for Pianists June 19-23

Many organists, whether recently drafted into playing or who have been

on the bench for quite a while, have had very little or no basic training in how the instrument works, how to choose appropriate registrations, how to play pedals with both feet or how to lead the singing of hymns and liturgy through effective playing. This workshop covers these basics. Pianists will also learn the same concepts of how to lead congregational singing of hymns and liturgy from the piano.



Intermediate & Advanced Level Organists June 26-June 30

For organists who have the basics covered but desire to improve their skills of playing hymns and liturgy. Topics will also include creative hymn introductions, making informed choices

about organ repertoire and strategies for leading challenging hymns. For more information, go to ctsfw.edu/MusicWorkshops or connect with the CTSFW Music Department at MusicWorkshops@ctsfw.edu or 260.452.2224.

Lands of Luther & Eastern Europe: Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation tour Nov. 11-21

The tour is hosted by CTSFW President Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. and his wife, Amy. Join one of the foremost Reformation scholars on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to explore the lands of the Reformation on its 500th anniversary. Walk together through the places where the Gospel was rediscovered, history was made and the world forever changed. Destinations include Berlin, Wittenberg, Eisleben, Leipzig, Eisenach, Erfurt, Prague, Augsburg and Munich.

For more information go to ctsfw.edu/CTSFWTours, email CTSFWTours@ctsfw.edu or call 260.452.2119.

CELEBRATIONS

Faith recognized for 'excellence'

The second annual Ralph Weiser Excellence in Ministry Award was presented by Chris Weiser to Faith Lutheran Church, Magnolia, Ark., and its pastor, the Rev. Jim Jobst, on March 5. The \$5,000 award is bestowed by the Mid-South District in recognition of exceptional service to the Kingdom of God and the LCMS.

The first recipient was recognized at the 50th Anniversary Banquet of the Mid-South District last year. Chris and Margo Weiser were presented with the award honoring the late Ralph Weiser for his many years of service to the LCMS and the Mid-South District. Chris and Margo are Ralph's son and daughter-in-law.



Trailblazers (junior high campers) saddle up for a trail ride during summer camp 2016.

Concordia University Nebraska, has been working with previous program director, Laura Kobs ("Strawberry"), to plan a full schedule of activities.

By David Cox

Director, Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean

Camp registration is still open for the Lutheran Camp on Petit Jean Mountain, and most of the eight camp sessions have room for additional participants. The camp draws children and youth from dozens of LCMS churches throughout Arkansas and the greater Memphis area, as well as from surrounding states.

Program Director Bethany Brown (camp name: "Stitches"), an education major at

Campers will hike mountain trails, swim, canoe, ride horses, enjoy large group games, visit the petting zoo and compete in archery. They will take part in daily Bible studies, morning and evening devotions, service projects and campfires, with lots of singing. And they will reconnect with old friends and

make new friends.

In preparation for summer camp, some staff attended group initiative course (challenge course) training at Camp Lutherhoma in Oklahoma in April. All staff will receive CPR and first-aid training and certification through the American Red Cross during staff training in early June. Cabin counselor Daniel Erickson ("Finch"), an EMT and senior pre-med student at Texas A&M University, will serve as camp first-aid officer.

Although the early registration deadline has passed, discounts are still available for camper siblings, returning campers who bring first-time camper friends, and campers who attend more than one session.

Parents can learn more about the Lutheran Camp and register online at lutherancamp.org.

ANNIVERSARIES

(50 or more years)

- ▶ **Bob and Evelyn Battershell**, of River Valley Grace, Lamar, Ark., celebrated 60 years of marriage on Feb. 10.
- ▶ **Earl Dee and JoAnn Burghart**, of Faith, Forrest City, Ark., celebrated 60 years of marriage on April 19.

Deadline for the August issue is June 15

Digital files, sent via email, are preferred. Email submissions to lw@mid-southlcms.com, or mail via U.S. Postal Service to:

Judy Otto
150 N. Maury St.
Holly Springs, MS 38635

Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.

