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# ZION NEWS

A newsletter of Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Lawrenceville, Georgia – August, 2010

“Come let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God.” Jeremiah 51:10

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## Vacation Bible School 2010

by Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

We had a great turn-out for our VBS this year, with the highest number of attendees in Zion's history! We had thirty-five students registered for our VBS. Four did not attend, but we had three more that were not registered who did attend. So we had a total of 34 different children attend this year from 16 different families (14 were non-member families). With this large attendance we were glad to have three teachers and an assistant. We really appreciated the effort of Mrs. Eileen Tiefel who flew in from Eau Claire, Wisconsin and taught the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> grade class. Debra Mayhew taught the Pre - 1<sup>st</sup> graders. Virginia Tetens was invaluable as a floater helping with the level 1 and level 2 classes, whenever and wherever she was needed. Pastor Mayhew taught the 5<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> grade class, which, though the smallest class, still had nine attendees. What a blessing it was to be in our new building for this record turnout!

Here are some 2010 VBS stats:

- **12 registrations came from our flyer distribution this year** (three of these did not attend);
- **8 registrations came from flyer distribution in previous years** (this number includes Annie and Nathan King who became members of Zion as a result of our VBS program two years ago, and two grandsons of Roger Ziecker, who began attending Zion after receiving a VBS flyer last year);
- **6 registrations came from VBS information on our website** (one of these did not attend -- this is a lower number than we have had in the past, but we get a constant number through this medium every year);
- **1 registration came from VBS information on our website from a previous year;**
- **5 registrations came from personal invitations** to others by Zion members;
- **6 registrations were from members of Zion** (we actually had 8 member children in attendance, but

the Kings were included above because they became members through a previous VBS program).

Look at how the Lord has blessed our VBS program over the past few years! Vacation Bible School is a lot of work; but it is a very effective tool which the Lord has used to bring to children and their families the Good News about Jesus – the one and only Savior. One of our members recently stated: "VBS has been the most effective form of outreach for our congregation!" Our thanks to all our members for their help and support to make VBS possible! †

*One non-member parent commented about our VBS: "(My children) enjoyed themselves tremendously, and although it was their 4th VBS experience this summer, they liked it the best! I think the intimacy/size of the groups made it even more special... And of course I am always blessed by them learning the scriptures; it is a great and helpful supplement to what we are teaching at home."*

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### In This Issue:

- p. 1 Vacation Bible School 2010
  - p. 2 Christ speaking to us
  - p. 3 Faithful and Reforming
  - p. 4 Church Fathers - Polycarp
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## Christ speaking to us

*The following article was written by LC-MS Pastor Larry Peters. It was given to Pastor Mayhew by one of our members. Pastor Peters offers an important reminder concerning the distinctly Lutheran (and Biblical) view of the Word of God, and so it is reprinted here.*

This is an essential catholic and evangelical truth: the Word of God does not speak of something the way, for example, I may speak of something I know or have an opinion about. Scripture is God speaking. When Scripture speaks, we hear the voice of God.

For most of Protestantism Scripture has become a book of rules to be followed, a set of principles to inform how we reshape the world, a set of practical tools to better your life, or a road map to lead you from here to eternity. But that is just plain wrong. Scripture is the voice of God. Scripture is the discourse of God in human words. This Word is powerful and can do what it claims and keep all its promises. This Word has the power to call and gather the Church.

On Sunday morning we often treat the Word of God as if it were nothing more than a book of wise sayings, some of which may be practical enough and pointed enough to make a small difference in the ordinary and mundane of our world. We treat so casually what is essentially the Voice of God who speaks to us and is speaking to us in Scripture.

We act as if the gems of Bible study were the hints or conclusions reached from that study — like a school child reads the encyclopedia for things he or she can use in a paper that is due tomorrow. Bible study is important because it is time with God, it is the conversation in which God is the speaker to us and we who have ears tuned in faith can hear Him speaking. It is not what we learn from Bible study but what we learn in Bible study as a people gather to hear every word and as a people who know that this every word is important.

Nowhere is that more true than in worship — the Word of God predominates not because we have found it useful but because it is Christ

speaking to us. In this respect liturgy is the only real context for us to hear Scripture — everything else flows from this assembly and is not in competition with it or can substitute for it.

This is what we need to rediscover — the urgency, the immediacy of God's voice in our midst. In response to that voice, we come, we listen, we hear, and we grow. The distasteful practice of cell phones and watch alarms going off in worship is a sign that we have not understood that Scripture is God's voice speaking to us — or surely we would shut those things off. The strange practice of people moving in and out of the Sanctuary as the Scriptures are read and preached is a sign that we do not understand that Scripture is God's living voice speaking to us or we would find a way to fit our bathroom needs around this holy and momentous conversation in which God is the speaker and initiates the dialog that brings forth faith in us and bestows upon us all the gifts of the cross and empty tomb.

Instead of burying our faces in bulletins to read, we would raise our heads to listen. I am convinced that the reading of Scripture is heard differently than the reading of Scripture from a service folder page. We don't listen to each other with our heads buried in a booklet. We listen to each other by looking at the point where the voice is coming from and by learning to tune out the distractions so that we might hear what is said. This is the discipline that is so missing on Sunday morning.

All because we think of Scripture as a vehicle that delivers something to us instead of the thing that is delivered — the voice of God speaking grace and mercy, conviction and condemnation, redemption and restoration, death and life... Wisdom!! Attend!! †

# Faithful and Reforming - The Necessity of Right Fellowship

*The following article was written by Bob Hulteen, the editor of an independent monthly "pan-Lutheran" newspaper in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota. He provides a review of the history of American Lutheranism and reports faithfully on the reason for the formation and continuation of the CLC.*

If mapped out on paper, the history of the Lutheran church in America resembles a tree with myriad branches. Some branches bend toward each other for a time, and then head a separate way. Sometimes twigs split off forming new branches.

The Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), a Lutheran body with about 80 congregations or teaching points throughout the United States, celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2010. But it traces its history back to the origins of the Lutheran movement. The CLC became its own branch "out of necessity."

## Origins in the Synodical Conference

In 1872 American Lutheran church bodies often had geographical or ethnic identities; some were allied with a "home" state church, others were opposed. In that year, the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, or popularly the Synodical Conference, was organized by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Ohio Synod, and the Norwegian Synod. This new body was to be an expression of the unity of these four church groups.

(The Slovak Synod joined the Synodical Conference in 1908, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, or ELS, joined in 1917, when that group of congregations broke away from the Norwegian Synod, which had merged with other Norwegian Lutheran church groups.)

According to John Lau, former president of the CLC's institution in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary, these groups were in full communion, shared educational facilities, did joint mission and benevolence work, and had open pulpit fellowship.

Early on, the Synodical Conference which held a high regard for fellowship and accountability, struggled with internal disagreements over the doctrine of predestination. But, it was in the 1950s that some congregations were challenged to confront what members took as an affront to biblical commitment.

## The context of a new Lutheran body

In the 1950s, concerns arose among several of the synodical partners about stances taken by LCMS, particularly in terms of biblical interpretation. Some saw indications that LCMS was no longer committed to sola scriptura, scripture alone. The concerns were so deep, a call for disassociation from the Synodical Conference began to be heard from some pastors and church leaders, especially within WELS.

As David Lau, brother to John and archivist for the CLC, explained in his recently published history of the CLC, *Out of Necessity: A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession*: "In 1955 one of the other synods of the Synodical Conference, the

Wisconsin Synod, passed a resolution declaring that the Missouri Synod was causing 'divisions and offenses' [from Romans 16:17] contrary to the Word of God. One of their committees said that, because of this, it was necessary to avoid the Missouri Synod because of its toleration of false teaching. In fact, the committee said that if they postponed the decision to avoid the Missouri Synod in 1955, they would be violating the Word of God. But when the matter came to a vote,

the Wisconsin Synod voted not to break fellowship with the Missouri Synod."

Over the next few years, a debate arose with WELS concerning the appropriate time and

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method for ending fellowship with the Missouri Synod. In each instance, action was postponed. Eventually, some then-WELS leaders felt compelled to withdraw participation from a group they saw as in error.

Pastor Maynard Witt of Spokane, Washington, first took a stand, saying in 1957, "Out of love to the Wisconsin Synod and out of love and fear of the Word of God, I am compelled to announce my severance of fellowship from the official Wisconsin Synod."

Later that year, another WELS leader, seminary professor Edmund Reim, concurred: "I hope and pray that the Synod may yet return to its former ways and to full obedience to the Word of God. I trust that you will realize that I take this step, not in anger, but in deepest sorrow, and because I am constrained by the Word of God."

These statements set in motion developments that led to the formation of a college and seminary in 1959 (Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary) and a convention to establish a new Lutheran church body in 1960.

### The formation of the CLC

In August 1960, about 75 delegates (42 pastors included) met in Watertown, South Dakota, to function as an Interim Conference to determine if there was sufficient common belief to form a joint body.

For several years committees had been drawing up documents to approve in order to move forward in common mission. These documents were then put forward for adoption.

David Lau states: "For a while it looked as though we would not be able to adopt a confession on church fellowship at this convention. There were even charges of false teaching directed toward some of the participants in these debates. But, after more discussion it was realized that the problem was based on misunderstanding." The



confession "Concerning Church Fellowship" was approved unanimously.

When voting on the name of the fellowship, "Immanuel Lutheran Conference" won the first ballot, matching the name of the already existing college. But on the third ballot, Church of the Lutheran Confession received 39 votes to 29 for Immanuel.

Fifty years later, June 21-25, the Church of the Lutheran Confession met in Eau Claire, still united "out of necessity."

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## Meet the Church Fathers

by Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

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### Polycarp (69-155)

Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of the apostle John and a friend of Ignatius. Irenaeus – who was a student of Polycarp – later wrote, "I could describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught... how he would speak of the conversations he had held with John and with others who had seen the Lord." Polycarp also suffered martyrdom when he was burned at the stake during the persecution under Antoninus Pius (see the letter of the church of Smyrna to the Philomelians).

While Polycarp wrote several epistles, only one has been preserved to the present day – his letter to the Philippians. As a person reads Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, it can be seen that Polycarp was familiar with nearly all of the New Testament writings, and shows a great similarity to the writing style of John. His letter is full of practical wisdom and encouragement, emphasizes the doctrine of grace, and rebukes false teaching. Polycarp writes, "Wherefore, leaving the foolishness of the crowd, and their false teaching, let us turn back to the word which was delivered to us in the beginning, watching unto prayer and persevering in fasting, beseeching the all-seeing God in our supplications to **'lead us not into temptation,'** even as the Lord said, **'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'**" (7:2). †