

# Faith & Fellowship

Vol. 87, No. 1

January/February 2020

Engage



## THEOLOGY

Evangelism in  
the Old Testament

p. 4

## DISCIPLE-MAKING

The Interview:  
Cultivate New England

p. 14

## INTERNATIONAL MISSION

70 Years in Japan

p. 17



# CLB

[www.CLBA.org](http://www.CLBA.org)

**4** **Evangelism in the Old Testament**  
Brad Pribbenow

**6** **Evangelism in the New Testament**  
Daniel Berge

**8** **Evangelism in a Hostile, Vile, and Broken World**  
Gaylan Mathiesen

**10** **CLB Focus**  
ROY HEGGLAND

**11** **New Beginnings**  
Andrea Bernard

**12** **Faith Clarity**  
Nick Mundis

**14** **The Interview: Cultivate New England**  
Ryan Nilsen

**16** **Student Trip to Japan**  
Lutheran Brethren Seminary

**17** **70 Years of Ministry in Japan**  
Matthew Rogness

**18** **Pray CLB: I Am With You**  
Evan Langlois

**19** **CLB News**

**20** **re:Think**  
Brent Juliot



**FAITH & FELLOWSHIP**  
*Volume 87 - Number 1*

**Editor In Chief/**  
**Graphic Designer:** Troy Tysdal  
*ttydsal@clba.org*

**Contributing Editor:** Brent Juliot  
*bjuliot@clba.org*

**Copy Editor:** Aaron Juliot  
*ajuliot@clba.org*

**Cover Photo:**  
*Engage/nimis/iStock*

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. [www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

**Quiet Moments**

Email prayer requests to: [pray@clba.org](mailto:pray@clba.org)

**Wherever He Leads**

H.E. WISLØFF

A product should extol its producer, the created its creator. The goal of life is to live to the honor of our Savior. It is this which gives content and purpose to our life. To the extent that we succeed in living to the glory of God, we have filled the place assigned to us.

God himself has arranged the good works which he wants his children to perform. We are to walk in them. There is something continuous in the word walk. It is not something accidental.

In the presence of God we discover the good works. We are given eyes to see the opportunities, ears that hear the



Patrick Daxenböhler/iStock

sighs of souls, and there we are given courage to walk the path of sacrifice if that should be needful. The good works are often found on stony paths and in tangled thorn bushes.

Ask God to make you keenly aware of the slightest directive of your master’s hand. He lives in close fellowship with his followers. And to that close fellowship

belongs a hearing ear and a willingness to follow wherever his path leads.

*Hans Edvard Wisløff (1902—1969) was a Norwegian theologian and writer. He was also the Bishop of the Diocese of Sør-Hålogaland from 1959 until his death in 1969.*

*Wisløff, H.E., Quiet Moments on the Way Home. Fergus Falls, MN: Faith & Fellowship Press, 1993.*

# The White Horse

TROY TYSDAL

**Christian tradition** holds that the book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John while he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos for preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. The book gives us a heavenly perspective on many earthly events, and some believe we see the birth of the Christian Church in chapter six.

In chapter five, the Apostle John is taken up to heaven. He sees a scroll that no one is able to open—a scroll sealed with seven seals—and he begins to weep. As tears fill his eyes, he is interrupted by an elder, who says, “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals” (5:5). John looked up to see a Lion who looked like a Lamb who had been slain.

This is Jesus, the crucified one, the one who laid down his life for the sins of the world. In that moment, the weeping stopped and the worship began. The angels cried out, “You are worthy... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God” (5:9). And then Jesus, the Savior, opened the first seal.

## REVELATION 6:1-2

The Apostle John writes, “I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.”

The identity of the rider on the white horse is controversial. Some say the rider is Satan, the deceiver, the one who leads the whole world astray, but the other four horsemen of the apocalypse are plain personifications—war is war, injustice is injustice, and death is death... so the rider on the white horse, who is given a crown, is a king. Irenaeus—a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the Apostle John, the author of the book of



Thomas Shanahan/Stock

Revelation—says the rider on the white horse is the Lord. Lutheran theologian R.C.H. Lenski associated the rider with the Lord as well, but said it can’t be Jesus as we know him, because it is Jesus who opens the seal. Lenski believed the rider on the white horse to be the Word of God.

When the first seal was opened, the disciples down below on the earth were afraid. They were hiding, when suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God began to move forth into the world to conquer—and all are conquered. Those who hear the Word and reject it are conquered for judgement, and those who hear the Word and receive it are conquered for salvation.

The weapon carried by the rider is as controversial as the identity of the rider. He carries a bow. Why a bow? The simplest theory is probably the right one. It’s because no one outruns the arrow. In the Apostle John’s day, the bow was the weapon of choice to reach those at a distance—and the rider on the white horse, the Word of God, is going to the ends of the earth.

It has been said that God’s Church doesn’t have a mission, so much as God’s mission has a Church. We are the Church, and we are sent to our neighbors near and far—that they may know the eternity-changing truth of Jesus Christ.

When I had the opportunity to visit our mission field in Chad, Africa, I was blessed to worship at a Chadian church on a Sunday morning. I was struck by

the words of the pastor. He said, “We are overwhelmed by refugees fleeing from war. We are hungry from a weak harvest. It feels like the end times.” His words startled me. It feels like the end times? I didn’t feel it! Maybe you don’t feel it. But the pastor was right. The Scriptures tell us that the hour is drawing near (James 5:8). We are in the end times.

The whole world knows war. The second horse, the red horse, has been set loose. Can you hear the hoofbeats?

The gap between rich and poor is growing. We in North America are the haves in a world of have nots. The third horse, the black horse, is here. Can you hear the hoofbeats?

We, as believers, rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ for our salvation, but we know the final horseman—death—is coming, and there is still work to be done.

Maybe you’re afraid. Maybe you’re worried what people might think if you live out your faith. We don’t want to be those crazy people always talking about someone who rose from the dead... or do we? Jesus said, “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).

If you are afraid, fear not! He is sending you, but you are not alone. He has promised to be with you (Matthew 28:20). Rest in that! Find peace in that, but feel the urgency, because God’s mission has a Church, and the final rider is coming.

Hear the hoofbeats.

*Rev. Troy Tysdal serves as editor in chief of Faith & Fellowship magazine.*



Bible Scrolls/group1/Stock

# Evangelism in the Old Testament



J-TERM SPEAKER

**BRAD PRIBBENOW**

**E**vangalism... *in the Old Testament?* For many people today, this phrase sounds like a contradiction in terms. After all, we don't see the Great Commission until the New Testament, right? (See Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8.) So why (and how) would Old Testament believers want to—or know how to—share the Good News with others?

It is true that there is no formal “great commission” given to the people of Israel as there is to Christians in the New Testament. But there are numerous places where they are called to tell others about God. Take, for example, Psalm 96:3, “Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all the peoples.” What are those marvelous deeds? Most certainly this list would have included how God made us and performed miracle after miracle to rescue us from sin and slavery.

We can also see in the way God called prophets that he desired the message of his glory and love to be shared with people who did not know it. Consider Jeremiah, who was told by God, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (1:5).

We can even look to the Israelites in slavery in Egypt for another example of God's constant desire to save non-believers. As God is preparing to free the Israelites through the sending of various plagues, he states his purpose numerous times: “...so that you will know that I, the Lord, am in this land” (Exodus 8:22) and “so that you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth” (9:14). The success of God's judgment/salvation purpose is shown by the fact that as the Israelites departed Egypt, not only were they given “departing gifts” from many Egyptians (12:36), but there were even

some converted locals who joined their faith community (12:38).

So, what did evangelism look like in the Old Testament? Here are a handful of unique Old Testament examples of evangelism:

## EVANGELISM THROUGH FAMILY

At the heart of the Old Testament social structure is the family. God designed it this way. Deuteronomy 6-7 shows the family functioning as a means of evangelism. In everyday family life, they were to speak of God, explaining the stories and core tenets of their faith. More formal avenues of evangelism through the family are demonstrated by the book of Proverbs, which serves as an instruction manual for young children who are crossing over the threshold into adulthood.

## EVANGELISM THROUGH SPIRITUAL WARFARE

This topic can make us feel a little

***“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.”***

***Psalms 96:1-3***

uncomfortable, yet it is very much a part of the Old Testament’s history. The enemies of God take physical form in the many nations, rulers, and empires who come against the people of Israel. As the people of Israel engaged in battle with earthly enemies, we are often given a glimpse into the battle that simultaneously raged on in the spiritual realms. One such event is in 2 Kings 6 where Elisha and his servant are surrounded by a host of well-armed Aramean horsemen. Elisha’s servant fears for their lives. But Elisha knows something his servant does not. He says, “Don’t be afraid, . . .those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (6:16). Then the text says that Elisha prayed that God would open his servant’s eyes. “The Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (6:17). Truly, the battle is the Lord’s.

#### EVANGELISM THROUGH WORSHIP

Acts of worship fill the pages of the Old Testament from beginning to end. Worship, carried out in line with God’s instructions and faithful to his Word, served to announce and demonstrate the presence of God for us in the sacrifices and praises of Israel. Even today, Christ-focused worship that is faithful to the gospel is a most powerful means of telling the story of Jesus Christ in a culture tempted by idols at every turn. Worship is one of the most accessible and effective forms of evangelism the Church has. In the Old Testament, God’s character and glory were exemplified and his Word was read so that, through that hearing, faith might be created in all who participated

(Romans 10:17). Even though the people of Israel were the main guests in worship, there was also an “open-door policy” to anyone seeking the Lord for his mercy. (See King Solomon’s prayer of dedication for the temple in 1 Kings 8:22-53.)

#### EVANGELISM THROUGH VOCATION

What I mean by “vocation” is one’s everyday activities (sometimes seen as common and mundane) through which one provides for self, family, and neighbor. It may seem strange to talk about “vocation as evangelism” in the Old Testament, except that we see numerous examples of it. Most often, the examples we see were set up by unfortunate circumstances. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers (Genesis 37:25-28); Nehemiah ended up in Babylon after the exile; Daniel was also brought against his will to a foreign land. As Daniel went about his daily work in the political cabinet of a foreign king, the Lord blessed him (Daniel 1:17). When various adversaries tried to smear Daniel’s reputation, they couldn’t find anything to use against him (6:3-5). When Daniel was underhandedly accused of breaking a law against praying to God, the Lord again protected Daniel. This led to the king (and the whole land) hearing of God’s unique power and glory (6:25-27).

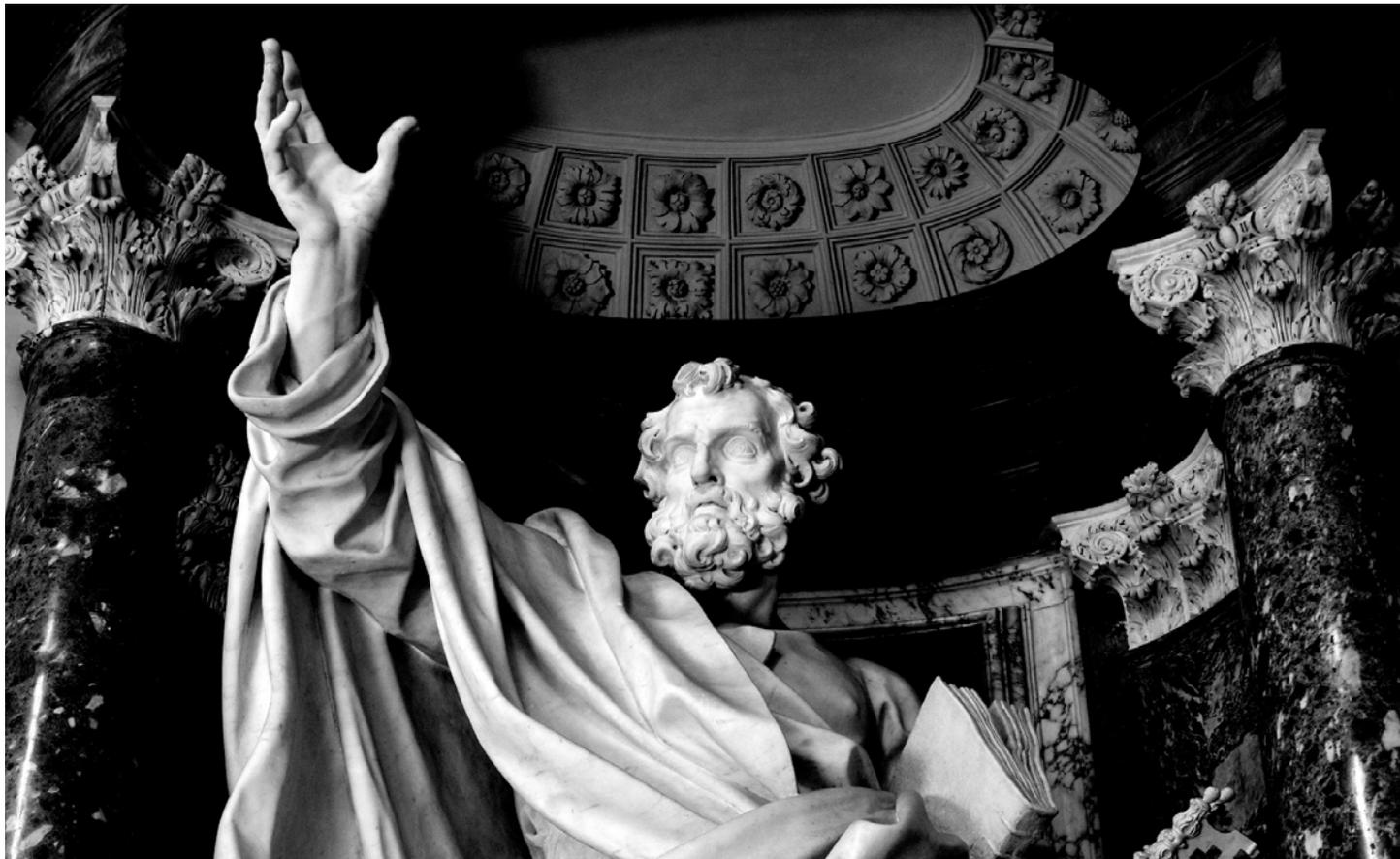
Evangelism—telling the story of God’s love for us, specifically in Jesus Christ—is woven throughout pages of the Bible. From Genesis 3, when sin and death entered the world, the telling and receiving of this message has literally become a life-and-death matter. Because there was no other way of salvation in the

Old Testament than through faith in the promised Messiah of God, evangelism was just as central to the Old Testament people of faith as it was to the New Testament people of faith. I pray this brief study of Old Testament evangelism will enlighten and encourage you as you seek to carry on the gospel preached to all nations through all time—until Christ returns!



*Dr. Brad Pribbenow Ph.D. serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as dean of Lutheran Brethren Seminary and professor of Old Testament.*

 <b>LBS</b>	<b>J-Term</b>
<b>Engaging the People of Your World</b>	
What does it look like to make disciples of all nations?	
<i>Sessions Available Online - 2/15/20</i>	
<a href="http://www.LBS.edu/JTerm">www.LBS.edu/JTerm</a>	



Sculpture by Pierre-Etienne Monnot/Massimo Merlini/iStock

Peter the Apostle.

# Evangelism in the New Testament



J-TERM SPEAKER

**DANIEL BERGE**

**A** real challenge in reading the New Testament is to let it say what it actually says. I experienced this when I was tasked with writing on the topic of evangelistic engagement in the New Testament. I started out thinking I'd look for some nice principles that I could use to support what we already think about reaching out to others with the gospel—things like “meeting people where they are,” “building bridges,” or even using “mentoring relationships.” Starting that way, I was able to find enough support in the Scriptures to back up what I wanted to say.

But while doing that, I realized I was putting a strong filter over the text and was only allowing certain things to come through. So I decided to work through the New Testament fresh, to hear what it says about this subject before laying such a strict grid on it. As I did that, I discovered

results that I was less comfortable with, but that were probably more accurate to God's Word than my first approach. I found that evangelistic engagement in the New Testament was largely confrontational, divisive, and flourished under persecution.

That may not be what we'd think of right away, but I imagine that many Christians—for example, those of the first 300 years of Christianity, those involved in the Reformation of the 16th century, as well as the many Christians in persecuted regions today—would quickly affirm these truths. Consider the actual texts with me and see how this looks:

#### CONFRONTATIONAL

In Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested for “teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (4:2). As they stand before the authorities,

they boldly announce the same message that got them arrested in the first place. At this point, the leaders allow them to go free, but this won't be their last arrest. Having a sense of this volatile situation, the church gathers to pray. Interestingly, they don't pray for peace, moderation, or opportunities at this point (though those are good things); in Acts 4:29 they pray, “Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.” And this is exactly what we see played out throughout the book of Acts.

In Acts 5:27-40 the Apostles are brought before the council of the high priest to be questioned. The high priest reminds them, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.” How should the apostles

***“The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.”***

### **Acts 4:1-2**

respond to such an accusation? They answer, “We must obey God rather than human beings!” Their bold answer pushes forward into confrontation, rather than pacifying a volatile situation (5:33). Later, when Stephen has a chance to speak, he closes with the confrontational words, “You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised... You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (7:51). This led to his immediate stoning.

Confrontational encounters are repeated in Samaria (8:20), Cyprus (13:10), and all over the Mediterranean world. When Paul is later urged not to return to Jerusalem—because the believers knew he would enter into conflict—Paul responds, “I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (21:13). The early Church often spread its message confrontationally with boldness.

#### **DIVISIVE**

It should come as no surprise that such confrontational engagement led to a divisive environment. Through these confrontations, the early Church had no problem drawing firm lines between those inside the household of faith and those outside. As the Jews began reviling Paul in Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas boldly proclaimed, “Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). A few verses later, Paul and Barnabas are recorded shaking the dust off their feet against them and moving on. This is certainly reminiscent of the exhortation Jesus gave to the ones he sent out before his crucifixion in Matthew 10:14, Mark 6:11, and both Luke 9:5 and 10:11.

Jesus himself had established this divisive way of thinking, even correcting some misperceptions about his ministry when he said, “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not

come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother... a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household” (Matthew 10:34-36). Paul too carried this divisive way of thinking into congregational life. He warned the Ephesian elders to be aware that fierce wolves will attack the church with false teachings (Acts 20:29ff), and he exhorted the Corinthian church, “Expel the wicked person from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:13).

It should be noted that these conflicts and this divisiveness were not something the Church necessarily sought or wished for; their goal certainly was unity (John 17:23, Ephesians 4:1-5, and more). But in Christ-like humility they preached the Word boldly and recognized that these divisions were often the result.

#### **FLOURISHED UNDER PERSECUTION**

It should come as no surprise that confrontation and divisions naturally led to persecution. While we tend to think of persecution as a terrible thing, it often also led to a great expansion of the Word of God.

Following the great confrontation with Stephen in Acts 7, Acts 8:1 says, “On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem,” scattering the Christians “throughout Judea and Samaria.” I would have thought this was a bad thing. However, God used this persecution to spread the Word. Acts 8:4 records, “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” Such persecution became part of Paul’s early message as he exhorted the disciples in Lystra and Iconium in Acts 14:22, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” Likewise, others were reached through the way Paul endured persecution—such as the Philippian jailer of Acts 16. In fact, much of Paul’s message to the Corinthian

church in 2 Corinthians centers around this unexpected reality, where Christ works through weakness (12:10). I would have thought these early leaders viewed persecution as a bad thing, yet several times in the New Testament, and in the early Church fathers, we see them rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer like Christ (e.g., Acts 5:41, Colossians 1:24, 1 Peter 4:13, and Ignatius’ Letter to the Romans). For both personal sanctification and public witness, the early Church learned to rejoice in persecution and saw the Word of God flourish.

In contemporary North America, we probably don’t think of our evangelistic outreach in these terms. Perhaps in our context we shouldn’t. Maybe other principles like unity, inclusion, and bridge building are more important today. On the other hand, a time may be coming (or maybe has already come) when we will need to rely more on God to proclaim his Word boldly—even when the immediate results might make us uncomfortable. May God grant us such faith, for this world needs to hope in him.



*Dr. Daniel Berge Ph.D. serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as professor of New Testament at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.*

 <b>LBS</b>	<b>J-Term</b>
<b>Engaging the People of Your World</b> What does it look like to make disciples of all nations?	
Sessions Available Online - 2/15/20 <a href="http://www.LBS.edu/JTerm">www.LBS.edu/JTerm</a>	



D\_Light/Stock

Celtic Cross in western Ireland.

# Evangelism in a Hostile, Vile, and Broken World



J-TERM SPEAKER

GAYLAN MATHIESEN

*“I, Patrick, a sinner... had for father the deacon Calpurnius... I was at that time about 16 years of age. I did not, indeed, know the true God; and I was taken into captivity in Ireland with many thousands of people... And there the Lord opened my mind to an awareness of my unbelief, in order that... I might remember my transgressions and turn with all my heart to the Lord my God... And he watched over me before I knew him, ...and consoled me as a father would his son. Therefore, indeed, I cannot keep silent, nor would it be proper, so many favours and graces has the Lord deigned to bestow on me in the land of my captivity. For after chastisement from God, and recognizing him, our way to repay him is to exalt him and confess his wonders before every nation under heaven.”*

**S**o begins the *Confession* of St. Patrick, 5th-century Apostle to the Irish, patron saint of Ireland. If Patrick were here today, could he teach us anything about engaging the broken world around us—a world that is immoral, violent, and, at least to our prideful eyes, an unlikely candidate for

the gospel (as the Celts were considered in his day)?

Although several generations of his family were prominent Romano-British Christians, before his captivity he didn’t “know the true God.” But six years of captivity as a sheep-herding slave was a life-transforming experience for him. His Irish-Celtic captors were a warrior people on both land and sea. When the Romans first encountered them, they said the Celtic warriors seemed demon possessed—the archetypical barbarians who fought like wild beasts. It took Rome hundreds of years to push them to northern Britain and Ireland. Then, as the Roman Empire weakened, Celtic raiding parties erupted again. It was on one of those raids that 16-year-old Patrick was taken captive. For six years, Patrick would be immersed in the language and culture of his captors.

But God was in this: spending most of his time alone with animals, Patrick had abundant time to think... and pray:

“But after I reached Ireland I used to pasture the flock each day and I used to pray many times a day. More and more

did the love of God, and my fear of him and faith increase, and my spirit was moved so that in a day... [I said] up to a hundred prayers, and in the night a like number. ...and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, because, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me at that time.”

The God he had once learned about in the catechism became real and personal to him.

Six years later, Patrick heard a voice in a dream: “You do well to fast: soon you will depart for your home country,” and a short time later: “Behold, your ship is ready.” Patrick escaped, and 200 miles later found the ship, but the captain refused him passage. As he walked away, he began to pray. Just then, he heard the crew calling: “Come, hurry, we shall take you on in good faith...” Since these were pagan sailors, Patrick “had hopes that they would come to faith in Jesus Christ.”

After three days they reached land, and after 28 days of wandering, they began to starve. Patrick wrote:

***“Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”***

***Isaiah 55:7***

“...the next day the captain said to me: ‘Tell me, Christian: you say that your God is great and all-powerful; why, then, do you not pray for us? As you can see, we are suffering from hunger...’ I said to them full of confidence: ‘Be truly converted with all your heart to the Lord my God, because nothing is impossible for him, that this day he may send you food.’ ...so it came to pass: suddenly a herd of pigs appeared on the road before our eyes, and they killed many of them... And from that day they had plenty of food.”

Many years later, Patrick again was taken captive. Again, the Lord delivered him and returned him home to train for the priesthood. Sometime later, he saw a vision of people “crying as if with one voice: ‘We beg you, holy youth, that you shall come and shall walk again among us.’ And I was stung intensely in my heart... and thus I awoke.”

When Patrick applied for mission work in Ireland, at first his superiors deemed him unsuitable. But he eventually arrived in an isolated area of Ireland where there were no cities, just farms and scattered people. There were a few Christians there, but the vast majority were steeped in polytheism. Magic and sacrifice, including human sacrifice, were among the religious rites performed by their druid priests. Soon after arriving in Ireland, Patrick succeeded in convincing the Irish King Loigaire to grant religious freedom to the Christians. Not long after, the king’s brother converted. Over the next 15 years of his ministry, much of Ireland was converted, with some 200 churches planted. He writes that he “baptized thousands of people.”

How might Patrick be an example for us today in reaching a society that is increasingly postmodern, post-Christian, and looking in all the wrong places for a home for their soul?

Having become a man of prayer, grounded in the Word of God, Patrick conducted his ministry fearlessly among his former captors, gaining their respect. Ministering in a group-oriented culture, he formed and traveled with evangelistic teams, working for conversions of chieftains and tribes. Patrick offered no cultural benefits to the Irish except deliverance from murder, slavery and the tyrannical fear of a horrifying pantheon. He fully relied on the power of the Word of God and the Name of Jesus. He came to love and serve the Irish people in humble confidence, making use of anything good and admirable in the culture. He “became Irish” and taught the Scriptures in familiar terms that connected with their culture. Much of what has been written about Patrick is questionable, but there do seem to have been dramatic encounters between him and the druid magicians through which the Name of Jesus proved the superior power. For a people who lived in paralyzing fear of their horrible gods, this was good news—they could be delivered!

The result of Patrick’s evangelistic church planting work is of historical significance also, as the Celtic monasteries served as mission compounds and centers of great learning, supplying the west with evangelists and scholars for centuries to come. These monasteries served as discipling communities where anyone could come and belong as they learned the gospel. Here, monks copied volumes from the libraries of Europe (that were at that time being burned by barbarian hordes), thus preserving the accumulated knowledge of western civilization from destruction. Many of them beautifully decorated, these Celtic “illuminated manuscripts” are today cherished works of art.

The spiritual descendants of Patrick launched a missionary movement that spread the gospel across Europe for

hundreds of years in the longest sustained missionary movement the world has ever known. It was a monastery-centered Church, with the governance of the monasteries patterned after the Irish chieftains. These were mission centers that in turn produced some of Europe’s best scholars and missionaries who played a key role not only in the re-education of all of Europe, but its re-evangelization as well. Let us remember this heritage and thank God the next time we celebrate St. Patrick’s Day.



*Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen Ph.D. serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as professor of Mission and Evangelism at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.*

 <b>LBS</b>	<b>J-Term</b>
<b>Engaging the People of Your World</b> What does it look like to make disciples of all nations?	
<i>Sessions Available Online - 2/15/20</i> <a href="http://www.LBS.edu/JTerm">www.LBS.edu/JTerm</a>	

<h2>Source</h2>
1. The Confession of St. Patrick: <a href="http://www.ccel.org/ccel/patrick/confession.txt">www.ccel.org/ccel/patrick/confession.txt</a>

CLB Shared Ministry: Contribution Report

**\$1,796,640**

Received Through 12/31/2019

**\$2,900,000**

2019-20 Contribution Goal

**\$1,828,602**

Anticipated Through 12/31/2019

The CLB Fiscal Year Ends April 30, 2020.

# Bringing the Gospel

ROY HEGGLAND

**W**hen you saw the title, *Engage*, for this issue of *Faith & Fellowship*, it may have led you to pause and think about one or two of the following questions. Let's look at how the Bible would address them.

1. *Before I bring the gospel to my neighbor, should I prepare myself? Do I need special training? Don't I need to be armed with great arguments for why my neighbor needs to believe the gospel?*

The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." As people who belong to Christ, we are to be ready to answer anyone who asks us why we have hope of eternal life. It is because Jesus paid the penalty for us and gave us this life as a gift.

2. *Isn't it enough if I am a really good neighbor and they see that there is something different about me? Can't that be enough for my neighbor to receive the gospel?*

Consider this: if you just received incredibly good news like a clean bill of health after suffering with cancer for years, would you expect your

neighbor to know that good news if you never told them? Or even more importantly, what if your neighbor was suffering from the same type of cancer and there was absolute evidence that the therapy that cured you would work for your neighbor? Would you expect that being a good neighbor or telling them to see their doctor would be sufficient, or do you need to tell them the "gospel"—the good news of what has happened to you? And you'd be anxious to tell them they can be cured too. Romans 10:14 says, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" Other translations substitute "telling them" for "preaching to them." So, no, it doesn't mean that the pastor is the only one who can preach the good news to them. You and I need to tell them.

3. *My neighbors are really great people. Better than I am. How would they ever believe that they need the gospel? Or, conversely, my neighbors are the worst people I know. They are beyond help. They won't listen to anything I say.*

In Romans 3:10-12 we read, "There is no one righteous, not even one;

there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Scripture makes clear that both of those neighbors, and all people, are in the same condition before God without Christ. We are called to tell them the good news. Christ doesn't say that it is our job to make them listen. God's Spirit is the only one who can open their ears to the truth and give them life through the Word you share.

We also know from Scripture that all of humankind is our neighbor. That is why we in the CLB share the good news with people in the United States and Canada, Africa, Taiwan, and Japan by preparing and sending out pastors and missionaries and planting new churches. I encourage you to bring the good news to your neighbors by actually telling them why your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and by giving to the Church of the Lutheran Brethren so many more will hear the Word that brings life.

*Roy Heggland is Associate for Biblical Stewardship for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*

Support the CLB:

ONLINE:  
www.clba.org/giving

BY MAIL (USA):  
P.O. Box 655  
Fergus Falls, MN 56538

BY MAIL (CANADA):  
P.O. Box 739  
Birch Hills, SK S0J 0G0



# New Beginnings

ANDREA BERNARD

**N**ew beginnings. January is one of my favorite months. I sift through the past year's pains and joys and plan for the upcoming year. I smile at the good times, bury the bad times, and drink coffee while I make my checklists on how I'll do better next time.

As I think of the upcoming year, I can't help but be struck by the whirlwind of the past few years. There were many good times, but overall, I'd been confronted with some harder realities. I had boxed God into a corner of my life and trusted my own checklist, narrative and expectations rather than his.

In 2019, God ultimately granted me some needed rest from myself, with the painful loss of life expectations. As God and I had a tug-of-war over my heart, he eventually took my checklist of life narratives away and slowly ripped it up in front of me. The pain in life was only soothed by words of fellow believers and reminders of gospel truths of his finished work. I used to believe that sharing the gospel only meant telling non-believers about Christ. But the more I grow, the more I recognize that I need to hear it myself—over and over.

Ecclesiastes 3 speaks of seasons and emotions in life. It speaks of a time to be born, to die, to plant, to harvest, to heal, to break down, to build up, to weep, to laugh, to mourn, to dance, to keep and to cast away, to love and to hate. I know these emotions and seasons.

A few months ago, I uprooted my life and moved from Seattle, Washington to DeWitt, Iowa. Iowa has rolling prairies to hike through, and I recently learned that the root system of a prairie is 10-20 feet deep. Every few years they conduct



amenic181/Stock

controlled burning to kill off things growing that will harm it. The deep roots of the prairie survive as the burning is done to ultimately revitalize it.

For me, these past years have felt like prairie burning years, mixed with God's grace and the encouragement of fellow believers to control the burning.

As I have been encouraged by God's narrative, rather than my own, this new life season has felt like a time of building up and restoration. I can't help but be grateful for friends both new and old in my life who constantly speak and live out God's gospel and grace.

Hebrews 13:9 says, "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace...."

As this heart of mine has been scorched in the prairies, it is now being revitalized—strengthened by grace in the reminder of the good news of Christ's life, death and resurrection. In this

life that God has gifted with changing seasons, emotions and life situations, I crave this good news. I can't help but share this good news with believers and non-believers alike, but also with myself.

*Andrea Bernard formerly served as Women's Ministries President for the Pacific Region—North. She now attends Emmaus Road Church, DeWitt, Iowa.*



Visit: [www.WMCLB.org](http://www.WMCLB.org)



Ville Heikkinen/Stock

# Faith Clarity

NICK MUNDIS

**A**t 5:00 a.m. on October 24, 2019, I pulled out of our driveway for an approximately 4500-mile road trip. I had some specific tasks I needed to take care of as I journeyed west, but I also simply wanted to get to know more of my brothers and sisters in the family of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB). I hoped these new friends would share their lives with me and “define the reality” of their contexts and their particular congregations.

My journey took me to a number of CLB congregations in Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. I listened a lot, spoke some too, met many new friends and a few old ones, laughed, shared some sorrows, worshipped, and clearly saw our God active in the lives of his people. My people. Our people. The CLB. What a great trip! The only downside was that I couldn’t spend more time in each stop along the way.

As much as I loved meeting new friends, I also needed to gather insight that would help us in the CLB in our call to be a *Disciple-Making Movement*. What are the things that unite all of our congregations? What makes a CLB congregation in Washington state similar to a CLB congregation in New Jersey?

And with that unity in mind on one side, from the other side we ask what makes a unique group of people effective to be a *Disciple-Making Movement* in a specific context—like Malta, Montana, for instance? These and many similar questions have largely consumed my energies during these beginning months of this new call to serve the CLB as Director of North American Mission.

As I journeyed to the West and back, I was hoping to gain greater clarity in describing and developing the CLB as a unified organization made up of individually unique congregations together forming a creative *Disciple-Making Movement*. This goal of clarity reminds me of the 201-mile section of my trip in northern Montana from Malta to Great Falls early Monday morning, October 28. My plan was a picturesque trip processing my upcoming meetings while enjoying God’s creation, but sometimes things don’t go as we plan!

The view out my windshield, for the better part of my 6-½ hour trip, was nonexistent. This was the definition of “white-knuckling” it. As I headed down this unknown stretch of two-lane highway I prayed for safety and “clarity” to see far enough ahead to keep moving forward. In those moments of nearly white-out

driving I found myself very dependent on things that I did not control, nor create:

1. The map was very clear—Hwy 2 west and then Hwy 87 south to Great Falls.
2. The reflective poles marking the pavement’s edge and the “washboard guides” were centering me in my lane.
3. The long-established rules of the road kept oncoming cars consistently passing on my left.
4. Finally, in the midst of the storm, the road was real, complete and prepared for me to get from Malta to Great Falls!

I am guessing many of you know where I am going with this. God is calling us to *GO!* Not necessarily to Great Falls, but he is sending us to expand the Kingdom of God—the family. Jesus is inviting us to follow him “out there.” He is giving us all we need to *move* to that spot he has prepared for us. After all, we are a *Disciple-Making Movement*.

1. His Word is perfect, true and sufficient.
2. By the Spirit of God at work in us, we see with a *Faith Clarity*.



# North American Mission

www.CLBA.org



CLBC President Jon Overland and North American Mission Associate Director Ryan Nilsen.

## A FAMILY OF CLBC CONGREGATIONS.

RYAN NILSEN

**T**his past November I spent eight days visiting and working with CLBC churches in Alberta. Meeting with President Jon Overland, I learned about the strong family of CLB churches in Canada. Here are some ways that Jon is encouraging us to pray for our shared mission in Canada:

# 1

Pray for newly ordained pastors, Rev. Ryan Dittman in Calgary, Alberta and Rev. Nick Laven in Estevan, Saskatchewan, as they begin this chapter of ministry in their churches.

# 2

Pray for Faith LBC in Estevan, Saskatchewan as they continue with their building project.

# 3

Pray for Resurrection Church in Camrose, Alberta as they grow and serve their community with recently completed facilities.

# 4

Pray for The River Church in Red Deer, Alberta as they reach a dynamic community of refugee immigrants and college students.

# 5

Pray for churches that are learning how to revitalize their ministries to reach their surrounding communities.

“Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see” (Hebrews 11:1, NLT). “But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, ‘How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:14-15, NLT).

The *Disciple-Making Movement* that is the Church of the Lutheran Brethren is united to *GO* with God’s grace! Our CLB congregations first gathered 119 years ago to be a missionary people. So, for us today, may we continue to be a sent people, driven by the joy of our salvation to become a unified and unique, abiding and ever-creative proclamation of the unchanging and eternal gospel.



Rev. Nick Mundis serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as Director of North American Mission.

Thank you for your prayers and partnership in the mission that the Lord has placed before the Church of the Lutheran Brethren Canada.

Rev. Ryan Nilsen is Associate Director of North American Mission for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



Boston, Massachusetts/Sean Pavone/Stock

Cultivate New England hopes to plant their first church in Boston, Massachusetts.

## CULTIVATE NEW ENGLAND

# The Interview: Cultivate New England

**RYAN NILSEN**

**R**ecently I met with Rev. Mike Natale of Faith Chapel Lutheran Brethren Church in Cranston, Rhode Island. In addition to serving at Faith Chapel, Mike is the Director of Cultivate New England. Mike and I met in a small town in eastern Connecticut, a place where we’d met previously with our Cultivate New England leadership team. In those past meetings, I was pastor of Praise Christian Fellowship, in Barkhamsted, Connecticut and very much involved in Cultivate New England’s leadership team. I’ve since accepted the role of Associate Director of North American Mission for the CLB, and I’m charged with overseeing church planting efforts. It’s a huge blessing to continue as part of Cultivate New England in my new

role, and to assist them in their efforts to plant a church in Boston, Massachusetts. On this day, I met with Mike so he could share directly with us the latest news from Cultivate New England—a partnership of the three CLB congregations located in New England working together to plant more Lutheran Brethren churches in New England (You can read about the origins of this partnership at: [www.CLBA.org/Cultivate-New-England](http://www.CLBA.org/Cultivate-New-England)).

**Ryan: What’s the news from Cultivate New England (CNE)?**

Michael: Several months back, a group of us from our three churches (Bethany LBC, East Hartland, CT; Praise Christian Fellowship, Barkhamsted, CT; and Faith

Chapel LBC, Cranston, RI) gathered in Boston for a prayer walk. Around 10 a.m. we met outside Quincy Market. After a short meet and greet, we broke into four groups. Each group was given a map with a different path through the city that would eventually bring us all back to the Boston Commons. Following an opening prayer each group took off following their map. My group’s first major monument was City Hall Plaza. As we marveled at its structural beauty, a plaque on the building caught my attention. Here is what the plaque said:

**BOSTON:  
AN IMMIGRANT’S GATEWAY**  
“America’s promise has drawn people from all corners of the world to Boston,

*The Apostle Paul writes, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

*Philippians 4:7*

in search of a better life for themselves and their families. Their traditions and values have become the fabric of our neighborhoods. Here in Boston we seek to fulfill that promise by providing a life filled with peace, dignity, and opportunity for all who make this great city their home.”

— *Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn*

This quote was a powerful start to our prayer walk, because it reminded us of what Paul said in Philippians 4:7, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

True peace is found in God and our hope is that this church plant will help more people to know that truth.

More recently, in a continuation of our desire to cover this church plant in prayer, our three churches gathered together at Bethany in East Hartland for an afternoon event. We enjoyed a meal together, we had a time for worship, followed by a time of prayer, and then you, Ryan, shared a message of encouragement with those present. It was a great time for our churches to connect and to rally around our common goal of seeing the kingdom of God furthered here in New England by planting more churches.

### **Ryan: What’s next for CNE?**

Michael: Last month a group of us went into Boston and filmed a promotional video with the help of videographer Micah Nordtvedt. This video will debut soon on our Facebook page, so keep an eye out for it.

Currently we are in the process of talking with and assessing potential church planters. This process has been made easier with the help of Fifth Act Church Planting, who have been helping us run our assessments.

We have also been gathering

information and intel about specific locations in Boston to assist the potential planter once they are called.

### **Ryan: What do you think other churches can learn from what you’re doing?**

Michael: I pray that CNE encourages other congregations all across North America to ask the question, “Can we gather together with other churches in our area and do something like this?” Our denomination has strong roots in evangelism, and we want to see people come to know Christ. We know one way that’s possible is by reaching into our community and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. This was the main reason CNE was founded—we want to see the kingdom of God expand in New England. But we’d love to see the same thing happen all across North America and we hope to work with other like-minded clusters.

With that in mind, we at CNE would love to talk to you and would gladly share our findings and resources with any churches interested, so please feel free to reach out to one of us and ask.

### **Ryan: How can people keep in touch with what is happening?**

Michael: Great question. People can stay connected in a number of different ways. We currently have a Facebook page and an Instagram page up and running (search “Cultivate New England”). We have used both of those platforms to post many updates, and each week we use them to highlight a different location in or around Boston and encourage people to pray for that location. Each post has a picture of the area and gives a short write up on the community. It’s a great introduction to Boston and the surrounding area.

We are also in the process of launching

a new website that will not only have updates and pictures on it, but also have more background information about CNE and resources to share ([www.cultivatengland.org](http://www.cultivatengland.org)).

### **Ryan: How can people support CNE?**

Michael: First and foremost, we are asking people to pray for this endeavor. Prayer is so important and we in CNE are firm believers that if this is going to happen, God is going to be the one doing it. From the start we have acknowledged the importance of bathing this process in prayer and patiently allowing God to lead us moving forward.

Second, if you’d like to support us financially you can do so in four different ways (two directly and two indirectly): First, by giving to the CLB Eastern Region. They have been encouraging us since our conception and will continue to invest in us in the future. Second, by giving to North American Mission. When you support them, you are also supporting us. They have been a great help and encouragement to us as we’ve progressed forward. Never forget, we are all part of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren and when one of us succeeds, we all succeed. Thirdly, we have set up an account with PayPal that allows people to give electronically (a link can be found on our Facebook page). And the last way is by sending a check directly to the CLB, earmarked specifically for Cultivate New England.

### **Ryan: Thanks, Mike, for sharing this with us today. We can really see the momentum building for this project.**

*Rev. Ryan Nilsen is Associate Director of North American Mission for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*



L to R: Joy Mathiesen, Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen, Justin Carlson, Paul Fraser, Roger Larson, and Matthew Rieniets.

# LBS: Student Trip to Japan



LUTHERAN BROTHERS SEMINARY

**W**ith the goal of instilling a passion in students for reaching lost people, Lutheran Brethren Seminary offers a class called “Cross Cultural Communication in Mission.” The course requires a short-term mission trip where students examine their role as incarnational representatives of Christ. In the most recent trip, four LBS students visited Japan. They were accompanied by LBS Professor of Mission and Evangelism Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen and his wife Joy, who served many years with LBIM in Japan. While in Japan, the group was guided by current missionaries Dean and Linda Bengtson. The four seminarians, Matt Rieniets, Justin Carlson, Roger Larson, and Paul Fraser, share their impressions of Japan:

**MATT RIENIETS:**

In case you were wondering, Japan is not like North America! One obvious difference is that it doesn’t have a large Christian presence. Christians are very much the minority—less than 1% of the population. So Christians are facing the big issue of how the Church can actually reach out into the culture effectively.

It was a gift to us to have Dean and Linda Bengtson journeying with us and caring for us. They hosted us at the House of Hope in Ishinomaki. In their ministry outreach, they provide concerts, Bible studies, and cooking classes. They reach out as neighbors to their community.

We saw what the religious culture is, not just from a textbook, but by actually engaging people. The two main religions are Buddhism and Shinto, and the Japanese kind of blend them together. We toured two Buddhist temples, and got to visit with a Buddhist monk’s wife, and then the monk who is, basically, carving idols. It was really enlightening seeing how Japanese people answer the problems of life.

**JUSTIN CARLSON:**

The first thing you’ll notice in Japan is that it’s crowded. There were a lot of people on the train to Shibuya. This was the most crowded we experienced, but it’s not the most crowded that there is. The train stations employ people specifically to push people into the train cars so the doors can close and they can get on their way.

The large population is confined to small areas because there isn’t that much land in Japan usable for living. I’ve never been to Times Square, but our experience in a large city makes me think I know what it’s like. At one well-known intersection, there was a scramble crossing where everybody goes at once—like thousands of people crossing.

It also struck me when we went to something like a “dollar store” and there was a large selection of face masks available. It was not uncommon to see people wearing these if they are sick. It’s

a matter of politeness, to prevent disease from spreading either to you, or from you.

**ROGER LARSON:**

It was a privilege taking this “vision trip” to Japan. Most people in Japan do not have the light; most walk in spiritual darkness. Although our Lutheran Brethren Church in Japan just celebrated 70 years of sharing the gospel, there are yet many who have not heard the good news and many who though they have heard it, have not yet come to faith. Many Japanese consider themselves both Buddhist and Shintoist. However, religion does not play a big role in the everyday life of most Japanese people. Today, the average person usually follows the religious rituals at ceremonies like births, weddings and funerals, and may visit a shrine or temple on special occasions, or participate in local festivals.

One of the main barriers to Christianity is its exclusive orientation. Jesus is the only way to salvation. Japanese like to borrow favorite parts of different religions. There are many in Japan who don’t believe in any god and who are secular. This is especially common in big cities. Usually it takes many years of “seed planting” and cultivation for a Japanese person to come to faith.

**PAUL FRASER:**

Please pray for Japan and our mission there. Pray for more pastors and



# 70 Years of Ministry in Japan

MATTHEW ROGNESS

**T**he Lutheran Brethren Church of Japan, led by Pastor and President Takayama, gathered in Sendai November 3-5, 2019 to celebrate 70 years of God's faithfulness and the proclamation of the gospel in northern Japan. They gathered at the Sendai International Conference Center under the theme of "Worship in Mission." The theme verse was Psalm 34:1 (KJV), "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth." Pastor Sasaki was the main conference speaker. Together with the teaching and preaching there were video presentations of the "Beginning of LB Mission Work in Japan," the "North American CLB Congregations and Ministry," and the "LBIM work in Chad and in Taiwan." There was also uplifting music at all sessions led by Jun and Shizuka Sasaki.

It was a great privilege to represent the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of North America, together with our missionary couple serving in Japan, Dean and Linda Bengtson. I was honored to bring a greeting and a devotional message to those gathered for the celebration.

Your missionaries, Dean and Linda, presented a moving overview of the outreach ministry that they lead in Ishinomaki through the House of Hope. This included a visual presentation and church-planting report. A well-known Christian music artist in Japan, Shizu Takeshita, sang and gave her testimony about her ministry of 40 concerts at House of Hope since the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster. There were also three additional testimonials of those who have had significant ongoing ministry in the Ishinomaki area.

Another important aspect of this celebration was the participation of our sister Church in Taiwan. It was a delight to see the significant and important relationship between these two sister Churches as the China Lutheran Brethren Church (Taiwan) participated in this celebration. Pastor Wu, their President, led a delegation of seven.

As your director for International Mission, I was especially delighted to hear the presentation of Yushin and Takako Taguchi, missionaries from the Japan Church to the Maluku Islands, Indonesia! The planting of an indigenous Church includes that Church, in turn, sending missionaries. This is the evidence of this church-planting effort coming full circle to fruition. The Alune New Testament was completed in 2012 and the Taguchis are leading an Alune team remotely in the Old Testament translation while serving a congregation in Japan.

Together, let's praise the Lord of the Church for his faithfulness in the planting of the Japan Lutheran Brethren Church. Praise God for those from our North American Church who were called and supported to go as missionaries to Japan these past 70 years.

*Rev. Matthew Rogness is Director of International Mission for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*

missionaries. Pray for an openness to the gospel, and consider what God may be calling you to do, whether at home or overseas. One of the things that left an impression on me was how Dean and Linda did mission work. They are building relationships with a neighborhood, experiencing community.

One of the words of our God that really connects with the Japanese is from Isaiah 43, "But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine... Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you...'" (43:1,4a).

It's wonderful for them to learn that there's a God who knows them and sees them as loved and honored. He has taken their shame and dealt with it, so they are no longer shameful, but they are precious in the Lord's sight. That's good news for people who are weighed down with shame.

*Lutheran Brethren Seminary serves the Church and the world by preparing servants of Christ for a life of ministry in God's mission and for equipping His people to serve in His mission.*



Visit LBS at: [www.LBS.edu](http://www.LBS.edu)



# Pray CLB: I Am *With* You

EVAN LANGLOIS

It is 2,990 miles from Bethany Lutheran Brethren Church in East Hartland, Connecticut to Hope Church at Silver Lake in Everett, Washington. If I were to drive to Hope Church to fellowship with their congregation, it would take me two full days, driving non-stop. When I look at the map and consider the trip, this distance is so great that I most likely will never have fellowship with their congregation in person.

But on August 14, 2019, I talked on the phone with the Church Administrator at Hope Church, Warren Hall, about inviting our Lutheran Brethren churches out west to join in praying for the Shared Ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren (CLB) on Saturday, November 2. This was the first time I had ever talked with Warren. Afterward, I couldn't help but think how this man that I never knew before was *with* me. Though we live on different ends of this vast continent, we were united as brothers through faith in Christ, and also united as members of the CLB. We shared the same desires for our churches, for our denomination, and its leaders. And we shared the same conviction that, to carry out our ministries, we needed to pray!

On November 2, 2019, many churches across the Lutheran Brethren, both in the US and in Canada, and even out in our mission fields in Africa, took time to pray together for our synod. I often fail to think about just what a gift this is. God invites us to pray and to seek him. He invites us to join together in one voice and ask him that he would work through us to bring him glory and to make his name known. And on that day, I couldn't help but think that somehow,



Tinnakorn Jaruang/Stock

though we are separated by such great distances, through prayer we were shoulder to shoulder at the throne of God seeking him together. As Christ says, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). This thought is marvelous to me: on that day, we were with him and even mysteriously *with* one another at his feet.

Being *with* one another is important, especially since we are the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. And it was encouraging that we could pray together for President Larson, the Council of Directors, the Theological Council, and all those working in the synodical offices. It was a blessing to be able to lift up our Seminary and Hillcrest Academy, and ask God for more students. It was a blessing to pray expectantly for our missionaries working in foreign mission fields and for the church plants happening in North America, that God would be glorified in those works! It was (and is) a privilege to pray with you in all these areas that God might use our small denomination to make an eternal impact.

But the work is not over! We can continue to pray *with* one another that God would lead us and do great things in and through us for his glory alone!

*Rev. Evan Langlois is Pastor of Outreach and Discipleship at Bethany Lutheran Brethren Church in East Hartland, Connecticut.*

SAVE  
THE DATE  
Nov. 7-8

## Prayer Day: 2020

This was an incredible opportunity for the congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren to spend time in prayer for our Shared Ministries, and it was an incredible opportunity to know that we were seeking God together as the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. What is even better is that we can do this again. With that in mind, I want to invite you to mark your calendars for November 7-8, 2020. We want to solidify those dates, so that we can once again come together intentionally to pray that God would be glorified through the Church of the Lutheran Brethren!

*For more information on how your church can participate, contact: [evan.langlois@gmail.com](mailto:evan.langlois@gmail.com)*

## Elders Ordained



L to R: Elders Jim Hanson, Jordan Johnson, Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty, Elder Matt Griffith, Rev. Patrick Thurmer, Elders Tim Larson, Jim Teeter, and Mark Sohlt.

On February 17, 2019, Matt Griffith and Tim Larson were ordained as elders at Living Faith Church in Cape Coral, Florida. Rev. Warren Geraghty officiated.

## Breslin Installed



L to R: Elder Jim Pollock, Pastor Ben Breslin, Rev. Phil Heiser, and Elder Walt Wood.

On November 3, 2019, Pastor Ben Breslin was installed at Faith Fellowship Church in Kelso, Washington. CLB Associate for Ministry Support Rev. Phil Heiser officiated.

## Dittmann Ordained



L to R: Rev. Anthony Heiraas, Elder Rigo Salinas, Rev. Tim Fung, Rev. Nick Joyal, Rev. Ryan Dittmann, Elders James Muir, Greg Butler, Hannes Scholtz, and Pastor Jon Overland.

On October 6, 2019, Ryan Dittmann was ordained as pastor at Peace Lutheran Brethren Church in Calgary, Alberta. CLBC President Jon Overland officiated.

## Laven Ordained



L to R: CLBC President Jon Overland, Elders Brian Brandon, Garry Lafrentz, Rev. Nicholas Laven, Elders Barry Storozuk, Merv Puryk, Rev. Dan Krauss, Elders Arnold Betzema, and Blair Daae (Up Front: Molly Laven).

On November 30, 2019, Nicholas Laven was ordained as pastor at Faith Lutheran Brethren Church in Estevan, Saskatchewan. CLBC President Jon Overland officiated.

## Ronnevik Ordained



Back Row L to R: Oskar, Rev. Jon Ronnevik, and Kristin Ronnevik. Front Row L to R: Leif, Micaiah, Gunnar, and Haakon.

On January 5, 2020, Jon Ronnevik was ordained as pastor at Word of Life Lutheran Brethren Church in Fort Collins, Colorado. Rev. Gary Witkopf officiated.

**Faith & Fellowship** is the official publication of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, 1020 W. Alcott Ave., P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655, issued six times a year (January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, November/December) by Faith and Fellowship Publishing, 1020 W. Alcott Ave., P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655. Phone (218) 736-7357. The viewpoints expressed in the articles are those of the authors and may or may not necessarily reflect the official position of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America (CLBA). Periodicals Postage Paid at Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538.

(USPS 184-600) • (ISSN 10741712)

SUBSCRIPTIONS: **Faith & Fellowship** is offered to its readers at no charge. We would encourage your continued support with a donation, and if you would like to be on our mailing list, please contact our office. Periodicals Postage Paid at Fergus Falls, Minnesota. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please give both old and new addresses and allow four weeks.

Direct all correspondence, including submission of articles, to: **Faith & Fellowship**, P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655; Telephone, (218) 736-7357; e-mail, [ffpublishing@clba.org](mailto:ffpublishing@clba.org); FAX, (218) 739-5514.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **Faith & Fellowship**, P.O. Box 655, Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538-0655



## Faith that Moves You

A very mysterious event is recorded in Luke 5:18-20. “Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven.’”

These men cared so much about their friend that they resorted to drastic measures to place him before Jesus. But that’s not the mysterious part. That Jesus should respond by forgiving the man’s sins rather than heal him (the healing comes later), is surprising, but not mysterious. This simply reveals God’s priorities for us. There is, of course, the mystery of God’s grace: How can any of us, as sinful human beings, ever draw near to the holy God, and be accepted as pure and righteous in his eyes? It is only by the blood of Jesus shed for us. The love of God for us is beyond our full comprehension.

But the mystery that remains in Luke 5:20 is in the words, “When Jesus saw *their* faith...” Clearly this paralyzed man had faith himself. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please God...” This man believed in Jesus; he trusted in Jesus; he entrusted himself to Jesus. Or he would not have been forgiven. Faith is the only way.

But Jesus responded to *their* faith. Who are they? The man and his four friends. Isn’t faith personal? What difference does it make for this one man’s salvation and subsequent healing that his friends also had faith?

These are true friends. Four friends, with a shared goal for their mutual friend. They show extreme determination in getting their friend to Jesus, which can only mean one thing: They love their friend very deeply. We could focus on their extraordinary methods, but the real story is their extraordinary determination, commitment, and love.

Does your faith matter in relation to your friends or loved ones? Well, you can’t believe on behalf of someone else who is not willing to believe in Jesus. But perhaps you can bring your friend to the place where they can believe.

What might the scenario of the four friends look like among us today? We may be daunted by the task of introducing our friends who don’t know Jesus yet to him. Maybe we should start by introducing them to our friends who do know Jesus, to develop a team of faithful people who have a common purpose of introducing this one to the Savior.

Jesus forgives the man’s sins as he sees *their* faith!

*Rev. Brent Juliot is Contributing Editor to Faith & Fellowship magazine, and serves as Pastor of Living Hope Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin.*

Periodicals Postage Paid at  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538

For change of address:  
Faith & Fellowship  
P.O. Box 655  
Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655



# SAVE THE DATE

**DISCIPLE-MAKING GOD BC20**

CLB Biennial Convention  
**June 13-16, 2020**  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

**CLB**  
A Disciple-Making Movement  
www.CLBA.org