



**SELC DISTRICT**  
Lutheran Church  
Missouri Synod

# **The Lutheran Beacon**

**Let your light shine . . .**



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## **LWML NEWS**

by Milly Kwiatkowski, Interim SELC-LWML President

The SELC -LWML will be having our 17<sup>th</sup> convention this May 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 at Holy Trinity in Parma, Ohio. The convention theme will be Isaiah 40 vs.8:

***The Grass Withers, The Flower Fades; But The Word Of Our God Will Stand Forever.***

Registration forms are being sent out to all of our churches. We would like to have two (2) delegates from each church. Please make as many copies of the forms as you may need.

We are currently accepting applications for candidates for these offices, President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Pastoral Counselor. If you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to call me at 216.398.7321 or email me at [gasngomilly@att.net](mailto:gasngomilly@att.net).

Please join us for an interesting and enjoyable time.

Our guest Speaker will be Mary Bates from HARP [Helping Appalachian Rural People]. We will be collecting health care items for her rescue mission.

Our LWML Rep. will be Angelina Juarequi from Gospel Outreach.

Cynthia Khan, Community Director from POBLO.

Rev. Robert Marshall, Lutheran Heritage Foundation Rep.

***Please consider taking an active role on our LWML - SELC District. We began in 1984 and held our first convention in 1987.***

***Let us continue to move forward together!***



# The Quest for Happiness

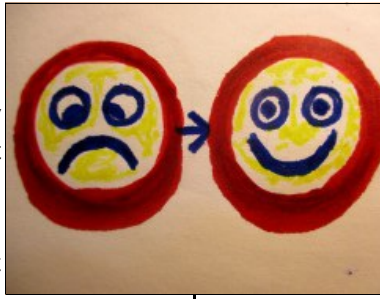
by Rev. Thomas Soltis

## Spiritual but Not Religious

Many Americans describe their belief system as “spiritual but not religious”. A survey by Pew Religion and Public Life Project revealed that nearly a fifth of those polled said they were not religiously affiliated. 37% of that group said they were spiritual but not religious. Lillian Daniel in her book, “When Spiritual but Not Religious”, writes: “Some are bold in their rebellion to the religious status quo of organized religion. They claim they find God in sunsets or walks on the beach.” Linda Mercadante in her book, “Beliefs without Borders”, makes the case that unchurched “spiritual” people can be quite deep theologically. Courtney Bender of Columbia University indicates those spiritual but not religious engage in everything from mystical discussion groups to drumming circles to yoga. The above descriptions indicate nothing new. History shows that such self-styled spirituality always existed in one form or another and is obviously outside the realm of the Scriptures and the power of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately those entrapped in humanistic spirituality are missing out on true peace and happiness only the Scriptures and God can provide.

## The Quest for Happiness

The search for happiness among the young is so great that Yale University offered a course, Psyc 157 “Psychology and the Good Life”. In about a week, 1,200 students (1/4 of undergraduates) enrolled. Laura Santos, a psychology professor, tries to teach students how to live happier lives. She writes: “Students want to change, be happier themselves and change the campus culture.” The “Healthy Minds Study”, a survey of 50,000 students at 54 schools, reported that 39% struggled with unhappiness, discontent and mental health issues. Such indications should alert Christians and congregations to reach out to those searching for happiness by sharing the Gospel of Christ and truths of Scripture which grant peace through the certainty of eternal life through Christ’s redemption and happiness through beneficial behavioral changes. Some congregations endeavor to personally keep in touch with college students and vigorously engage campus ministries.



## Preparations for College

Parents should prep their children for college not only scholastically but also spiritually. Many parents readily advise their college bound children with practical advice: “Study hard; no wild partying; make wholesome friends.” They should also prepare them spiritually to avoid anti-

Christian influences by engaging in daily prayer, Bible reading and regular church worship. The danger of atheistic, anti-Biblical professors doesn’t help matters. I once had one of my former confirmands, a 2<sup>nd</sup> year college student, complain about his biology professor. On the first day of class he posed the question: “How many of you believe in God as creator?” Half the class raised hands. “How many believe in evolution?” The other half raised hands. “By the time I complete this course, you will all be evolutionists.” I shared some anti-evolution facts and encouraged him to challenge his professor. He passed the course; his faith survived.

## Joy in Tribulation

Trouble doesn’t discriminate. Its vicious fist strikes every age - the young, the aging and aged.

Christians are not excluded. Consider St. Paul. Read about his overwhelming tribulations in 2 Cor. 11:23-29 ...imprisoned, flogged, exposed to death, stoned, shipwrecked, hunger, thirst, cold, naked, etc. The words of Jesus, “In this world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33), were fulfilled in Paul beyond measure. Yet he kept his “kool”. He maintained his stability. He said: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No. In all these things we are more than conquerors in Him who loved us.” (Rom. 8:35-37) There it is! The love of Jesus is the power of survival and joy even in tribulation. Despite his struggles St. Paul proclaimed: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Phil. 4:4) Even in affliction, Christians rejoice for they know the Lord disciplines them as a loving father disciplines a son. Read about it in Heb. 12:1-12.

## RELATED RESOURCE

[www.selc.lcms.org](http://www.selc.lcms.org) - Stewardship  
“Happiness”

## BITS & PIECES

### Annual Spiritual Fellowship Retreat



#### **A Look at 1 Peter: The Importance of Your Congregation to Culture & Community**

Date: Saturday, March 14th, 2020

Time: 9 am – 2:45 pm

Location: Dutch Valley Restaurant  
Sugarcreek, Ohio

Registration Fee: \$25

(includes Continental Breakfast and Lunch)

Deadline for Registration: Sunday, March 8th

For more information please contact St John Lutheran Church at 330-837-4645

### **Please help the LC-MS Disaster Response**

Since Hurricane Matthew destroyed much of the South Western peninsula of Haiti in October of 2016, the LC-MS Disaster Response has been helping them to rebuild homes, churches, and even dig new water wells. Those three years of work are finally nearing its end with the dedication of the final three churches that have been constructed. We have received requests for clergy stoles and communion ware to help support these newly rebuilt congregations. If you have items that you are willing to donate, please contact Rev. Jacob Deal by phone or email by February 16, 2020, if possible. (724)977-1682 or [pastordeal@saintspeterandpaul.net](mailto:pastordeal@saintspeterandpaul.net).

**Sept: 28-30! Save the Date Sept: 28-30!**

Please mark your calendars for the Annual Pastor and Church Worker Conference to be held in Florida. The conference will begin at 12 noon on September 28<sup>th</sup> and will end at 12 noon on September 30<sup>th</sup>. More details to follow soon.

**Faith Lutheran Church, Wesley Chapel** was established as a SELC congregation on January 26, 2020. **Pastor Kurt Steinbrueck** was installed as the Pastor.

### **2020 Congregational Treasurer Manual**

Just a reminder that there is a new Congregational Treasurer's manual available. There is one print copy still available or you can get the manual on a thumb drive or a CD. Please email Patti at [pgsmith@ptd.net](mailto:pgsmith@ptd.net) to request which version you would like.

### **Intergenerational Educational Outreach**

At Calvary (Parma, Oh)

**"Tell Me A Story!"**

**Saturday, March 28, 2020 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM**

Presented in various formats in the US and Canada, this fun-filled "Catechism Refresher" seminar featuring shared life-related stories is designed to encourage families and individuals of all ages or backgrounds to help others better know, love and serve our sinless crucified and Brother-Savior and ascended Lord Jesus Christ in today's undeniably complex world.

Though you may live nowhere near northeastern Ohio, perhaps you know someone else residing within a few hour's drive of this Lenten season event graciously hosted by Calvary Lutheran Church, 6906 W. Pleasant Valley Rd., Parma, OH 44129. There is no charge for the seminar (participants may make a purely voluntary contribution for the fellowship lunch).

Kindly RSVP to Calvary office manager, Lisa Klein, by **March 25**, or contact Pastor Ken or Lois Ballas at [KenLoB4455@aol.com](mailto:KenLoB4455@aol.com) or phone either of them at 440- 886-6462.

**Should you be able to join us on March 28, you will be one of many other welcome guests at what promises to be a spiritually uplifting experience!**

**DEADLINE FOR THE APRIL ISSUE OF THE LUTHERAN BEACON IS MARCH 12<sup>TH</sup>**

Send your articles and photos to: [gailpete37@yahoo.com](mailto:gailpete37@yahoo.com)

# What's Happening at the Haven

by Diane Leining

Most people have heard of the Stetson hat - a particular type of cowboy hat. Well in 1886, Mr. John B. Stetson built the largest and most historic home in Florida and they now conduct tours of this wonderful house. For the Christmas season, every corner of every room is festively decorated. In January, a group of Haven residents visited the mansion for that tour. They do not let you photograph inside the home, but take our word for it, it is beautifully done. Cook's Buffet is one of our favorite places, so we dined there for lunch. A terrific way to end the Christmas season!



**The Scottish Highland Games** come to the Orlando area every year and we always have a group of residents that love to go. The event includes acoustic Celtic songs and tunes, Celtic jam session, archery, highland dance, athletics, axe throwing, border collies, boulder boogie, kid's games, piping and drumming, shortbread and scones contest, whisky tasting and more. It's a very entertaining day!

**The Lutheran Haven Board of Trustees** meet on campus four (4) times a year. As they are all very busy people, many times they meet and the residents don't always get to see them. At least once a year, we have a potluck dinner during one of their meeting times. January was one of those times. The residents made some delicious dishes that we Lutherans are famous for serving. The Board members sat and dined at different tables amongst the residents and talked about their life at the Haven. A good evening was had by all!

**We have a group of about 16 ladies called the "Piecemakers"** here at the Haven. These very talented women meet weekly to make quilts all year long to give to Lutheran World Relief. Well, this year they far exceeded their goal of making 100 quilts a year! They recently boxed up 114 quilts, along with 67 personal care kits to be sent to



Baltimore where the Lutheran World Relief organization will distribute these works of art to those facing a challenge due to disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes etc. throughout the world. What a gift these talented ladies give to help those in need around the world!

I apologize to our northern friends shoveling snow but...as I write this article, we are getting ready to go to **Blue Springs State Park in Orange City, Florida** to hopefully see manatees in the springs. They enjoy the warm waters when the temperatures are low and sometimes we see hundreds of these adorable sea cows. Today however, it is going to be 87 degrees, so we probably won't see as many, but it is a lovely park and as always we will have lunch at a local restaurant on the river.



## Because Jesus/God Says So!

by Pastor Ken Ballas, EM

Also severely tarnished by human sin is our God-given gift of reason mentioned in Dr. Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Apostle's Creed. Unfortunately, we Christians sometimes give others the impression that we are totally "anti-reason" or "anti-science," while at other times we may go so far as to question the wisdom of our holy Creator-Redeemer God.

Elsewhere in his Small Catechism in urging us how to teach the faith in a simple way to our children, Luther pastorally anticipates our seemingly boundless natural curiosity regarding our Brother-Savior's precious gifts of Holy Baptism and our Lord's Supper by asking, "How can water (alone) do such great things?" or, "How can bodily eating and drinking [what only appears to our senses and limited reason to be bread and wine] do such great things as confer God's forgiveness of sin, eternal life and salvation?"

Those of us privileged to be parents or grandparents may at times be inclined to respond to our family members' at times seemingly incessant questions with a curt, "Because I said so!" Despite what our limited reason actually thinks or says (and even though our children may have difficulty regarding their parents or teachers as God's representatives, He alone has the absolute right to use the words, "Because I said so!" This is true especially regarding His loving commandments in both the Old and New Testaments of Scripture as well as His sacramental gifts of Holy Baptism, our Lord's Supper, the Office of the Keys to forgive or retain sins or even how we are to pray.

Regarding our Lord's Prayer, whether out of fear that repeatedly mouthing what our blessed Lord explicitly commanded His original student-disciples to pray become something purely mechanical (in a manner not unlike our habitually brushing or flossing our remaining teeth)," we do well to obey what Jesus says knowing that His every Word is lovingly commanded us earthly mortals for our eternal well-being. Incidentally, in the event that we awaken during the night and find

it difficult to get back to sleep, meditating on the often become purely words of our Lord's Prayer can bestow an unfailingly calming effect from our ever vigilant Heavenly Father who never slumbers or sleeps also in helping us victoriously cope with any and all negative thoughts which tend to keep His redeemed children from catching those much needed "zzz's!"

Biblical scholar and sainted friend, Dr. Kenneth Bailey, tells a story about meeting a young Latvian Christian girl who grew up under Soviet-dominated Communist rule. When asked if perhaps she had an older family member or acquaintance who secretly told her about Jesus, she replied, "No, they were all Communists!" before also adding, "One thing the Communists did allow in our village was recitation of the "Our Father" at funerals!" She further explained that although she initially had no idea what those words meant, by the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, repeatedly hearing them already as a child, she was eventually led to discover their origin and learn more about who Jesus was and all that He had come into our sordid, sin-stained world to accomplish for her and all of us.

More important even than our obvious need for God's fortifying love is grateful obedience to our loving Savior's clear commands: "Repent, believe, make disciples of all nations as you baptize and teach, eat and drink!" Reminiscent also perhaps of that Latvian girl and countless others that her experience coupled with such realities that Soviet Russia never changed the calendar name for the first day of the week (a word meaning "Resurrection!") is yet additional reason for God to laugh in His heavens (Psalm 2:4; cf. also the risen Christ's clear command in Matthew 6:9 or Luke 11:2ff.: "When you pray, say, "Our Father . . . and deliver us from the Evil One!" Failure to do what He says only results in many sadly continuing to "miss out" on our Triune God's readily unfailing available Spiritual direction during our often "bumpy" yet certain earthly pilgrimage.

Dear reader, please remember and take to heart that the words, "Because I said so!" need not only be perceived as irksome "Law" especially by penitent sinners who never tire of hearing the absolving words of their called pastor who has every reason to say to say to each and every one of us, "Baptized son and daughter of God, be of good cheer! All your sins are completely forgiven you by God only because of the holy, perfect life and innocent suffering and death and resurrection of our Brother-Savior Jesus Christ!" AMEN!



## Jesus Didn't Say That!

by Mike Rodewald, Ph.D.

CEO and Executive Director

Lutheran Bible Translators



It was called the 'never die' Church. The leader read John 11:25-26, "...everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." He applied the 'me' to himself. He founded a church and taught that those that believed in him as their pastor would never die. As congregants died, death was blamed on lack of faith. Of course the pastor eventually died. The church faded away, which tends to be the consequence when one applies the words of Scripture using one's own perspective.

There are many perspectives on the Bible and Christianity. I sometimes wonder where they come from. I recently read an article on another perspective. The author noted that nowhere in the Bible did Jesus' words address a particular lifestyle behavior. He concluded that since Jesus himself never issued a statement on the subject, accepting such behavior was the most appropriate expression of Christian love. In his arguments, the author effectively expanded Christian behavior to 'anything goes' since Christ's love covers all behaviors. If we take the words of Scripture and applies them to fit our own perspective, then Scripture becomes what we wish.

But making Scripture fit for our own benefit is not the message that God gives us through the words in the Bible. The Bible is not a mere book of laws governing behavior. If so, then Christians would just strive to be what God says we should be and interpret from the Bible what that behavior should look like. This is not the case. Rather the Bible as

God's Word fills us in about our relationship with God. We find we fall short—we miss the mark of what God would desire us to be. The behaviors which exhibit our shortcoming become apparent.

But God's Word doesn't leave us hanging in that limbo. We are told that Jesus as God's Son was sent, not to pronounce our behaviors as all okay, but to fulfill the law that our relationship with God might be restored. Paul expresses it clearly for us in Romans, "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit (8:3-5)."

We are given freedom through Jesus. Our behaviors are condemned. Freedom in Christ doesn't proclaim all behaviors okay, it just means that we now live not for our behaviors but rather for Christ through the Spirit. In gratefulness for what God has done for us, we live out our lives through behavior which witnesses to Christ – not behavior that reflects our own preference and perspective on our relationship with God.

What a joy to know Jesus. We don't live through our own perspectives or those of others. We have a better one – God's Word in the Bible.

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### Laudamus Spring 2020 Tour Dates Set

Laudamus, a select choir of pastoral ministry students at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, will tour the Northeast this March as part of its spring tour. The performance dates are as follows:

Saturday, March 14, 7 p.m. — Concert at First Lutheran Church, Boston, MA

Sunday, March 15, 8 a.m. — Service at First Lutheran Church, Boston, MA.

Sunday, March 15, 2:30 p.m. — Concert at Cadet Chapel, West Point, NY

Monday, March 16, 1:45 p.m. — Concert at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, NY

Tuesday, March 17, 7 p.m. — Concert at Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Garden City, NY

Wednesday, March 18, 7:30 p.m. — Service at Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Bronx, N.Y.

Sunday, March 22, 4 p.m. — Concert at Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Mo.

A member of the Seminary's admissions team will be available at most performances to talk with prospective students and anyone interested in church work opportunities, and to answer questions about the Seminary.

All of the concerts, except West Point, are free and open to the public. Freewill offerings can be given to support the music arts programs at the Seminary. To learn more about Laudamus and the spring tour, visit [csl.edu/laudamus](http://csl.edu/laudamus). In fall 2020, Laudamus will tour Virginia and the Washington, D.C., area. Venues will be announced as soon as they are available.