



# The Beacon Online

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## The Beacon Online is the communication source for the SELC District.

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### Why Did He Go Away?

Only because of Jesus is there a sense in which God's best gifts are yet to come!

Pastor Ken Ballas, EM

In 1953 millions including many "non-royal watchers" took note of the coronation of a then very young Elizabeth II, Queen of England. Baptized believers of every age and place also have good reason to regard our **Lord Jesus' Ascension into Heaven** 40 days after Easter as His Coronation Day. Although local customs vary and relatively few churches still observe this festival on Ascension Thursday, the theological significance of our risen and exalted Lord's ascension as King of Kings and Lord of Lords has not lessened or diminished.

Older on some early liturgical calendars than Christmas, Christians the world over do well to observe our sinless crucified but now ever-living Lord's bodily ascension into heaven. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in repeatedly referencing Christ's glorious ascension and session at God's right hand obviously *assumes* our Brother-Savior's resurrection from death and grave for us who by His grace happen to be living between His two Comings (note, however, the doxology at the very end of that marvelous letter).

Lutheran Christians are among those who continue to lend creedal affirmation to our Lord's state of exaltation who, only *after* His burial victoriously descended into hell before rising from the dead on the third day, ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11; Hebrews 3:1; 4:14-16; 6:20; 1 Peter 3:22). **Why**, then, did our incarnate Lord also publicly withdraw His physical presence and go away? Scripture gives several reasons why.

## ***He went away***

- 1. That the Holy Spirit or Comforter-Counselor might come in special measure** (John 16:7; Acts 1:8; also see 1 John 2:1 where "Paraclete" is used with reference to Jesus; the interesting word, ***Parakleetos***, may also be translated "Encourager" or even "Coach!");
- 2. To "finish" preparing a place for each of us** -- something our blessed Savior has already accomplished by His voluntary sacrificial death on Calvary's cross (John 14:2; 19:30);
- 3. To intercede for us** by praying for us as the only Mediator between God and man as we also pray to God (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 2:8ff.; 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1-2);
- 4. To give gifts** (including Spirit-empowered "people gifts!") "**for the benefit of His Church on earth**" (cf. Psalm 68:18 LXX; Ephesians 1:23 and especially 4:8ff.!);
- 5. To put all spiritual enemies under His [and our!] feet once and for all** (Hebrews 2:8ff.; 1 Corinthians 15:20ff. noting also the Litany Prayer found in our parish hymnals);
- 6. To patiently wait for us [and others!] to be born** (2 Peter 3:9, 15a and implications of the seeming "delay of the Parousia" or Christ's promised return also for sensitive "life issues");
- 7. To give His Church on earth time to grow** (Spiritually as well as numerically) that through His ongoing mission untold *others*, too, may yet hear and believe the Gospel of forgiveness of sins and receive with us God's promised gift of eternal life and, finally,
- 8. Strange as it may seem, He went away in order to come again** for us baptized believing Christians as Judge as our merciful Heavenly King and Living **LORD** graciously to take us home to His eternal haven of Heaven (John 14:3; 18:36; Acts 1:11; Hebrews 9:28).

Any attempts at systematizing Scriptural teachings regarding our Lord Jesus' ascension into Heaven ultimately serve to reaffirm the truth that our blessed Lord *went away* for the very same reason that He *first left* His Father's throne on high – **BECAUSE HE LOVES US!** God's incarnate Son has indeed "gone up with a shout of victory" to resume His rightful place at the right hand of the Father (Psalm 47:5; also see Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Our Lutheran confessions also remind us that "the right hand of God" is *everywhere* including in the sacramental gift of His Body and Blood in His Holy Supper! (Formula of Concord, Article 7). Rather than being away on a "well-deserved vacation" following completion of His earthly redemptive mission, our ascended Brother-Savior and living Lord continues to rule and reign in our behalf as our heavenly Prophet, Priest and King as He is indeed the living and loving **LORD OF ALL!** (Acts 10:36) **THANK YOU, JESUS! ALLELUIA!**



## **Confirmation at St. Luke's in Oviedo, Florida**

St. Luke's had a very exciting Confirmation on May 2nd. A few years ago we transitioned to family style confirmation, knowing that parents are the most influential person in a student's life. Watching these parents choose to put faith first and take time out of their schedule to teach, learn, and bond with their child was such a wonderful blessing. Fifty three students confirmed the faith they received at baptism beside their loving families, it was incredibly special!



Announcing the  
*Service of Installation for*  
**Reverend David Corson**

Chaplain, Laclede Groves  
Lutheran Senior Services



**SATURDAY, MAY 22, 2021**

**11:00 A.M.**

**CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
7291 SARAH STREET | ST LOUIS, MO 63143  
**MASKS ARE REQUIRED**

*Please RSVP by emailing [lisa.hamby@lssliving.org](mailto:lisa.hamby@lssliving.org)  
or by calling 314-446-2580*

*A light reception immediately  
following the service*



## Last Things First?

Only because of Jesus is there a sense in which God's  
best gifts are yet to come!

Pastor Ken Ballas, EM

"Eschatology" is that aspect of biblical theology involving "the last things" including the often sobering topics of death, the end of the world as we know it, and Christ's Second Coming also as a Day of Judgment which apart from the clear Gospel teaching of biblical Christology can be very scary. At the same time the Bible teaches that there is a very real sense in which only because of Jesus, our perfectly just and merciful God's very best gifts are yet to come!.

A New Testament passage like 1 John 3:2 is a prime example of what is sometimes referred to as "an inevitable *tension* between time and eternity" or "the already" and "the yet" which (again) because of Jesus should be deeply comforting to those whom the ascended Lord's apostle calls "God's beloved forgiven children."

"Beloved of God, we **are** God's children **right now**;  
it does **not yet** appear what **we shall be**,  
but we know that **when He appears we shall be like Him**,  
**for (at some unknown future time) we shall see Him as He is.**

Another familiar "obviously concentrated" instance of eschatological tension may be found on Good Friday during our crucified Savior's verbal interchange with the penitent thief on the cross in Jesus' assuring statement spoken from His center cross, "Truly I say to you, **today** you **will be** with Me in Paradise!" Though the dying malefactors crucified that day with our Lord were likely also buried or entombed, curious creatures that we are, we tend to get "hung up" on such peripheral matters as the meaning and precise location of the Persian loanword for "Paradise" (meaning a park-like garden) instead of focusing on the prominently positioned prepositional phrase "**with Me**" (noting the Greek word order and emphatic form of the pronoun which is so key to a proper understanding of this tender moment in our Lord's redemptive passion history recorded only by the evangelist in Luke 23:43).

"Earthbound creatures" that we mortals all tend to be and honestly are, we can readily identify with the story of a little boy fortunate enough to be raised in a Christian home who, after learning in a family devotion that some of God's very best gifts because of Jesus are **yet to come** (and that we can all eagerly look forward to our Savior's promised return as a blessed homecoming) was overheard praying later that night: "I really want to be in Heaven with You, Lord Jesus, but **not quite yet** because tomorrow is my birthday!"

Seriously believing there can be no "**heaven on earth**" could conceivably limit or demean the person and work of our sinless incarnate Heaven-sent Brother Savior Jesus Christ. As God's own precious Son born of a human mother, Jesus didn't come down to earth merely to redeem our souls. His lowly birth announced by God's angelic messenger to Bethlehem's sinful, frightened shepherds was intended as "**glad tidings of great joy**" which was intended as Gospel Good News to all His people, body and soul. Because God sent His uniquely special Son to redeem the whole person, we confess that we believe in the forgiveness of sins, **the resurrection of the body** and the life everlasting. With the completion of His bodily ascension into heaven, Christ's promised return at the Last Day as "perfect God and perfect Man" is the *only* unfulfilled creedal event yet to take place which is a reminder that we are indeed all living in "the last times!" (Acts 1:8-11; Hebrews 9:28)

Thus as baptized forgiven, blood-bought Christians who **watch and pray, wait, witness and worship** our Triune God especially by serving one another, may we never be led to think or believe that this side of Heaven our level of devotion in "rehearsing for eternity" by reflecting in faith God's love to one another in Jesus' Name is "one whit less" than God's **agapee** love in Christ for each of us (Luke 6:36-40; John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7ff.). That being the case, we can confidently also continue to pray, **"Come, ascended Lord Jesus, not that we would cease from our service or waiting but that we will unfailingly forever be with You and sin no more!"**

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## **Calls to the SELC District**

Emilie Stoller accepted the call to Ascension Lutheran Church in Montreal, Canada as their Deaconess. She recently completed her Deaconess internship at Ascension. She graduated from Concordia Chicago this Spring.

Clare Griffin accepted a call as a teacher to St. Luke's School in Oviedo, FL. Clare graduated this Spring from Concordia University in Mequon, WI.

We will have more information on all who have been called when they are installed.



## **MASS SHOOTINGS**

by Rev. Thomas Soltis, EM

### **Deadly Shootings**

In 1999, the Columbine school shooting left 12 students and one teacher dead. In 2007, 32 college students and professors were killed at Virginia Tech. The country's deadliest shooting took place in Las Vegas in 2017, with 51 dead. Recently, on April 15, 2021, a 19-year-old former employee killed eight workers at a Fed Ex plant in Indianapolis. The above examples and others have put people on edge. No one feels safe in a given place. Sudden death could come unexpectedly anywhere - while shopping, working, worshiping, driving a car - whatever, whenever, wherever. Scary.

### **Causes**

Eric Foster, in an article for the Cleveland Plain Dealer, offered some insights into tackling causes of mass shootings. He wrote: "Gun rights advocates routinely say: Guns don't kill people; people kill people. If that is true, then the key to reducing and/or eliminating mass shootings and overall gun violence lies in addressing people and their issues. One thing seems to be a relatively common trait among mass shooters. They all seem to have issues with their mental health." (CPD: 4-21-21)

### **Mental Health**

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, signs of mental problems can include pulling away from people, unusual or excessive activities, feeling like nothing matters, thinking of harming yourself or others. A Columbia University study revealed that, worldwide, only 8% of mass shooters had a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar issues, etc. Other difficulties such as drug and alcohol abuse, legal problems, coping with family or work problems, could also trigger a killing instinct. Census Bureau data indicated that at the end of 2020, almost half of Americans were showing signs of clinical anxiety or depression. Some psychological studies revealed that one person in every five families has had some form of repetitive minor mental abnormality at one time or another.

### **Biblical Law and Gospel**

The Bible contains two fundamental truths: The Law and The Gospel. The Law (God's commandments) defines sin and condemns transgressors. The Gospel declares Christ's redemption and assures full forgiveness. A frequent theme in

Christ's messages is found in Mark 1:15: "Repent and believe the Gospel." The Old Testament Hebrew word for repentance is "Shuv". The New Testament Greek word is "metanoia". Both mean: "Turn; make an about face; change your mind." Confronted with God's condemning commandments, sinners are moved to confess, turn from sin to God and there unload their guilt and fear of condemnation. The Biblical Greek word for Gospel is evangelism", which means "Good News", the joyous proclamation that Christ redeemed the world from sin and full forgiveness is assured to all who repent and believe the Gospel. Those who receive the Gospel assurance that God loves them are empowered, in turn, to love others as they do themselves. Murder is now not an option.

### **Guilt Removal**

A contributing factor of mental illness is guilt. Repentance and faith in the Gospel remove guilt. Aware of God's infinite forgiving love, forgiven sinners find themselves at peace with God, themselves, and others. In response to God's love, they love God and endeavor to keep His commandments, including the 5th: "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13) The law and Gospel are powerful deterrents against murder, suicide, and mass shootings.

### **Things to Do**

- Share God's Word - Sow the seeds of Law and Gospel everywhere. Some may take root in a troubled heart and prevent a tragedy.
- Pray for personal protection from mass shootings, also government solutions regarding domestic terrorism and murderous violence.
- Encourage those who show signs of excessive anxiety, mood changes, aggression, or depression to seek psychiatric help.



## **LCMS Board of Directors issues a Call for Nominations to fill a layperson term to Concordia Plans Board of Directors**

The LCMS Board of Directors to the Board of Trustees - Concordia Plans/Board of Directors - Concordia Plan Services has an unexpected vacancy to fill. The term is from 2019 - 2022. The LCMS Board of Directors must appoint one layperson to fill this vacancy. The person who fills this term will be eligible for possible re-appointment in 2022 with the potential for up to a total of four subsequent three year terms.

The qualifications include that 5 of the 12 lay persons on the Board must be experienced in the management of benefit plan investments, and at least one must have significant financial/audit experience.

If you would like to review the qualifications for layperson nominees that describe the specific qualifications and experience needed for the lay positions, please contact the District Office at this email address - [selc.lcms@gmail.com](mailto:selc.lcms@gmail.com)

The nomination form can be found at [www.lcms.org/secretary/appointmentforms](http://www.lcms.org/secretary/appointmentforms) The completed form can be emailed to [LCMSSecretary@lcms.org](mailto:LCMSSecretary@lcms.org)

The deadline for receiving these nominations is **Friday, May 28, 2021.**

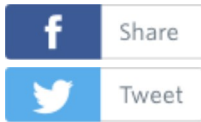


## LCMS Council of Presidents Extends Congregational Statistics Report Due Date to **May 31, 2021**

The LCMS has extended the deadline to return your congregational statistics. The new deadline is **May 31, 2021**. If you have not submitted your statistics for 2020, you will be receiving a mailing from the Synod that includes your log in credentials.

It is vitally important to the synod to have this information. The synod wants to know how all of the Churches are doing and also have the up-to-date congregational contact information as we move toward the 2023 Convention.

If you do not receive your letter from the Synod, or you are having trouble logging in with the credentials you were sent, please contact Rosters and Statistics at [Rosters.Stats@lcms.org](mailto:Rosters.Stats@lcms.org) or call them at 314-996-1366.



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