

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE
PROCLAMATION OF THE
WORD OF GOD



Psalm 119:105
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.

MARCH 2011

JESUS, THE GREAT "I AM"

Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Exodus 3:13-14

The "I AM" became flesh and dwelt among us in the person of the Son, Jesus. In the gospel of John, Jesus identifies Himself as the I AM thirteen times. Many who followed Jesus wondered who He truly was. John the Baptist wondered and asked, *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Matthew 11:3-5)*

Jesus told the woman of Samaria that if she drinks of the water that He gives, she will never thirst. The woman said, "Sir, give me this water." Then she said unto Him, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ." Jesus tells her that He is the Messiah. *I that speak unto thee am he. (John 4:26)*

Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. (John 6:35) Then Jesus compares Himself with natural bread. *I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:48-51)*

In John 8:23-24, Jesus tells us from where He has come. *And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*

When Jesus healed the blind man, He said He is the Light. *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:5)* Some questioned who it was that had healed the blind man. *Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. (John 9:9)*

In the tenth chapter of John, Jesus tells us by what means we can enter into the sheepfold. *Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. (John 10:7)* Also, *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. (v. 9)* Jesus made it very clear that no man can come to the Father except through Him.

Jesus continues in John 10:11, *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* In verses 14 and 15 He tells us again of His faithfulness to the heavenly Father and to us, His sheep. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

To remove any doubt when Jesus said, *I and my Father are one (John 10:30)*, He explains by saying, *Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him. (John 10:36-38)*

As Jesus speaks to Martha, He declares unto her, *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (John 11:25-26)* Because Jesus rose from the grave, we will also rise to be glorified with Him one day when He comes again.

In John, chapter 13, Jesus washes the disciples' feet. They call Him Master. *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. (John 13:13)*

Thomas questions Jesus about the way. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)* Jesus is the One who has redeemed us by His redemptive work on the cross and by His resurrection.

Finally, in *John 15:1*, He says, *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* Without Jesus we can do nothing, as He explains in *verses 4-5*, *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

As we look at all the I AM's, we can see how Jesus is everything to us, His children. We need no other as by faith and faith alone He is our I AM.

*God's peace,
Pastor Don Salo
New York Mills, Minnesota*

—●●●— Divine sovereignty is not the sovereignty of a tyrannical Despot, but the exercised pleasure of One who is infinitely wise and good! Because God is infinitely wise He cannot err, and because He is infinitely righteous He will not do wrong. Here then is **the preciousness of this truth**. The mere fact itself that God's will is irresistible and irreversible fills me with fear, but once I realize that God wills only that which is good, my heart is made to rejoice.

A. W. Pink

PASSION

It is the time of year that we give special attention to the passion of our Savior. As we look at the Savior, we see that the desire of His heart is to do the will of the heavenly Father (Hebrews 10:7). There is no other solution for the problem of our sin than the will of the Father. Nothing would satisfy the Father's heart but pure love and righteousness.

How could it be proven, but by the ultimate test? Could love and righteousness stand against sin and evil, as a man, and prevail through even the portal of death? Could the sin debt of all humanity be placed upon His heart without changing the content of that heart? Could mockery and scorn and rejection cause Him to call ten thousand angels and abort the mission? Was that Spirit without taint when it was commended into the Father's hand? Death. So devastating. So final. How are we to know the answers?

Apostle Paul says that Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). No taint came through. Those scars hold no bitterness. Those lips, no accusation. No vengeance cries out from the ground.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought—

My sin—not in part but the whole,

Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! (H.G. Spafford)

Jay Matson

Battle Ground, Washington

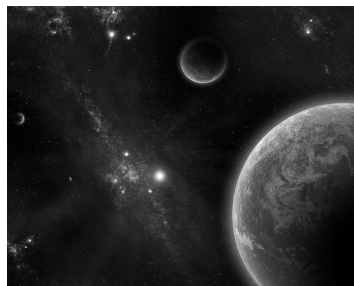
—●●●— **Lent:** the period of the liturgical year leading up to Easter. The traditional purpose of Lent is the preparation of the believer—through prayer, penitence, almsgiving and self-denial—for the annual commemoration during holy week of the death and resurrection of Jesus, which recalls the events linked to **the passion of Christ** and culminates in Easter, the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

www.wikipedia.com

WITHOUT FORM, AND VOID

The universe is a big, empty place. And quantum physics proves it.

If we look at the universe as a whole, we find it is made up of a bunch of galaxies separated by vast quantities of empty space. In other words, a whole lot of nothing.



When we zoom in a little and look at individual galaxies, we find they are made up of millions of solar systems separated by vast quantities of empty space. In other words, a whole lot of nothing.

Looking at the solar system, you've got a star and a few planets, maybe some asteroids and comets, separated by vast quantities of... well, you get the point.

Where it starts to get interesting is when you zoom WAAAY in, to the molecular level. Looking at molecules, we find that they are made up of a few atoms separated by—you guessed it—vast quantities of empty space. But wait, we're not done.

Looking at the atoms themselves, they are made up of subatomic particles called neutrons, protons, and electrons, separated by vast quantities of empty space.

Scientists keep looking for the most basic building block of matter. With multi-billion dollar particle accelerators, they have managed to break down those subatomic particles into elementary particles called quarks. Quarks are very small; there are only three in each particle. They are separated by vast quantities of empty space. (Are you surprised?)

At the present time, scientists have not been able to observe what quarks are made of. However, one theory is that they are little tiny packets of energy. In other words, no matter at all. Just... vast... quantities... of... empty... space.

So at the most basic level, we find that all matter is energy. This fits in with Einstein's theory of relativity and the whole $E=mc^2$ thing. What we think of as something is nothing.

This is not contrary to the Word of God. It is actually proven by the Word of God.

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was **without form, and void**; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5)*

God created the universe from nothing. In the beginning, the universe had neither shape nor substance. It was a perfect vacuum, empty of all matter and energy. He, the creator of all energy, took that energy and ordered it in such a way as to produce what we see as matter. All at His command.

Wow.

Jonathan Johnson
Battle Ground, Washington



THANK YOU

As I reflect on another year, I always think of new beginnings. The song "I Look Not Back" (Oskar Ahnfelt) is a beautiful reminder for all of us to look up into the face of Jesus, our Redeemer, Savior, hope and salvation. *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. (Psalm 121:1-8)* What comforting words to our hearts to know the Lord is our helper, friend, joy and strength, that He will protect us from all evil in this world, that He will keep us from all harm and keep us in His hands. What a blessed place to be—in Jesus' care and in His hands.

As this past year went quickly by, I and my husband and children have watched a miracle happen before our eyes. We

had quadruplets in September 2009. The experience we have had has been absolutely God-given. God has blessed us with seven beautiful children now, and it has been a joy to watch the babies go from ranging 2 pounds at birth to walking, starting to talk, and doing so well. Each milestone they passed has been another prayer answered.

We would like to thank all who have said prayers on our behalf. We have felt the prayers and been given strength and joy to parent these beautiful bundles of joy. *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD... (Psalm 127:3)*

We live in a trying time; so many terrible things are going on in this world. God promises to protect us from these things, but we, as parents, need to be aware of all the dangers and temptations of Satan. May we ask God for strength and wisdom *to train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)*

We would like to thank all of our Christian friends and family and ask you to continue to remember us in prayer as we desire to do God's will. May we hold on to our precious Savior and friend, that we would know and believe the precious Gospel that our sins are all covered in the name and blood of Jesus, that we would continue to share this precious Gospel message to all with whom we come in contact. What a blessing to be a child of God and know "what a blessed destiny we have when we believe." Songs are little sermons to me as I have missed church so often. God has given music and songs for comfort and strength. God is so good and He will not ever leave us or forsake us. Hold onto His promises. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. We leave you in God's precious hands and in His peace and love.

*Ryan and Linda Goddard with family
Woodruff, South Carolina*

Next month **"From the Mouth of Babes"** is coming. Please mail short prayers, praises, and inspiring thoughts by your children or email to cm@apostoliclutheran.org.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise. (Matthew 21:16)

ROOM FOR JESUS



The cuckoo bird of northern Europe deposits its eggs in the nests of other birds. As the newly-hatched cuckoo matures, it ends up crowding out the weaker birds and, in short, *owning* the nest. The end result is not good for the poor of the land.

This illustration is not to be applied to the innkeeper at the birth of Jesus. Little Bethlehem was simply over-crowded due to the tax registration and limited space among the kin relationship. The place for lodging was not what we westerners imagine it to be. It was simply a room within a modest average home, a home which often included an attached animal shelter. Joseph, Mary and Jesus-baby had human care *amongst their own* considering the circumstances. Not to do so would have been a disgrace to the Jewish family name. However, the birth of Jesus in the presence of beasts of burden and His later servant-life in the midst of sin-burdened slaves portrays divine humility and love without limit. He is not a despot, a suppressor of the weak and needy. His kingdom message is from heaven, not from the earth. His standard, demonstrated through His sacrificial life, created fear and opposition from the lovers of money, fame, power and deeds of darkness, i.e., "the worldly minded."

Despite the best efforts by earth-born philosophers and religions to make things better, there is no cure for the human heart dilemma save the "new birth" from God. Human history proves God's truth that man's heart is inherently evil (Romans 3:9-20); he, by his sin nature, is an enemy of God. Like a cuckoo bird, the unconverted, and yet very religious, man is *natural* in the way he deposits his "eggs of selfishness." The birth, servant-life, sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus points to a better way: God's way.

Yes, Bethlehem's "inn" was crowded, but what about our hearts, homes and the nations in which we live? *Is there room for Jesus?* No! Not until our unbelieving hearts are converted by God to believe God, for *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually dis-*

cerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14) Flesh profits nothing. The righteousness of Jesus is man's—the world's—only hope. It is the work of God to believe this. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* (Psalm 51:17) Jesus, through the God-given faith, is our "new birth."

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. (Romans 9:16) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:13-14) To God be the glory!

Pastor Arvo A. Onermaa
Hancock, Michigan

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Romans 8:22-25

— Christian contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.

Jeremiah Burroughs

— Wherefore, though the Christian, as a Christian, is the only man at liberty, as called thereunto of God; yet his liberty is limited to things that are good: he is not licensed thereby to indulge the flesh.

John Bunyan

Dear young children of God,

Hello to all of you. I hope you are having a good day. Mine is going well. I'm enjoying the bright sunny day that we are having. Just as the natural sun shines down and we feel its warmth, I pray that, when you read the Bible or sing your Sunday School songs or songs in church, the Son of God—Jesus—will be warmth to your hearts. We don't always see the natural sun or feel its warmth, but Jesus can always bring us cheer and help us feel better no matter the weather. I pray that you will always want to read about Him and learn more of Him as you grow older. It is important to read the Bible and you can ask God to help you understand.

When you go to church and hear the words the preacher is saying, it is a time to listen and learn more of what is in the Bible. You also learn by going to Sunday School and hearing Bible stories. You may be young now and a lot of things may be hard for you to understand, but just keep listening and you will learn. God's Word is full of learning and, when you read it, it can seem new each time. We who are older are still learning, too. None of us will ever learn too much, nor will we know all there is to know. For example, the Christmas story is read often, but we never get tired of hearing it. God does not want us to get tired or bored by His Word.

I AM THE LORD, I AM YOUR LORD

God is a jealous God and He wants us to love, serve and obey ONLY Him, no one else. In the Bible book of Exodus, God is speaking about Himself as He is giving Moses instructions in leading the Israelites. He did not want them to serve false gods: *For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Exodus 34:14)* By this use of the word "jealous" God is saying, "I cannot bear to have you serve any other than Me." It hurts God very much when people worship false gods and when they do not want to serve the only one true God.

I want to point something out to you since we are talking about gods. If you will notice that when god is spelled with a small or lower case 'g' that means it is a false god. When it is spelled with a large upper case 'G' it is the true God. You will

see this even in the Bible when you read it. You might look for this the next time you read it alone or with someone else.

After Moses had led the children of Israel far out of Egypt, God called Moses to come up into the mountain so He could give him the Ten Commandments to help instruct the people how to live. Moses was in the mountain for 40 days and the people thought he wasn't coming back. They thought they needed a god to worship so they asked Aaron, Moses' brother, to make them a god. They did not have faith to serve the real God as they still did not really know Him. They did not understand that God was always with them. They thought they needed to worship something they could see.

God saw the idol Aaron had made and He was very displeased and jealous. He told Moses that the people had made a golden calf and worshipped it and sacrificed to it. When Moses went down and saw the idol, he



was angry. He smashed the idol to powder and spread it on the water, and he made the people drink that water to punish them for their wrong. God was a jealous God even on that day, and He will always be jealous when we do not serve Him.

He is our God and He is your God. He is mighty in power in word and deed, and He loves us all so much. Let us ask Him to help us to be strong in Him, so that we would only serve Him.

*For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. **O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.** (Psalm 95:3-6)*

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

JEHORAM'S FOLLY



Jehoram was the king of Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet. It was he to whom Naaman, the Syrian, appeared with a letter from the king of Syria, requesting that the bearer be cured of his leprosy.

The account in *2 Kings, chapter 5, verse 7* makes known that Jehoram, in response to the letter, was overcome by suspicion and indignation. He rent his clothes saying, *Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.* There is something very significant about this encounter that is worthy of our attention.

What is so significant about this? The spirit of Jehoram is very much alive and his suspicion and indignation continue even unto this day. He typifies many in the mainstream clergy, whose greatest embarrassment are those who recognize their leprous condition and seek to be cured. Moreover, the quarrel as to how spiritual leprosy is cured yet exists and will continue to the end of time.

The members of the clergy are the leaders of the religious community, even as Jehoram was the leader of Israel. He who assumes the position of leadership of God's people has the responsibility of looking after their spiritual needs. Should he fail, as did Jehoram, he is accountable for his failure. This fact is made known in the parable of the unjust steward.

Jehoram's reaction clearly relays the following message. First, he did not recognize God's leading of Naaman. Second, he was wholly unprepared and powerless to deal with the soul care for which he was duty bound. Third, he did not understand the spiritual office of Elisha, nor its power. Is not this typical of many in the clergy?

The clergy, in most cases, lacks the spiritual insight to recognize the extent and severity of the disease, especially when the symptoms have been eliminated and replaced with godly works. Neither does it perceive the spiritual kingdom of God or recognize the office of the holy priesthood that has been estab-

lished upon earth in Christ's first coming. The reason, of course, for the failure is the lack of the spirit of God, as it was with Jehoram. Therefore, its members are blind leaders.

Many of us would agree, but what has this to do with us? It is that Jehoram's folly tends to carry over into living Christianity. We need to recognize the folly, lest we be deceived also. Moreover, we need to stand against it, lest the Church be overtaken by it. If there was ever a time that the Church was in danger, it is now.

It concerns us because our natural portion identifies with the godly environment of "Jehoram's palace," wherein our honor is preserved and wherein the sights are pleasing to the eyes and the sounds pleasing to the ears. Therefore, we need to be reminded that an environment that is appealing to the flesh is often void of spiritual enlightenment and power to deal with the needs of the soul, even as Naaman learned firsthand.

Our inclination toward Jehoram's folly is evidenced by our willingness to bring our unbelieving relatives and friends to church in the midst of finery, eloquent speakers, beautiful music and the like. (Of themselves, these are not evil if they are kept from being the focus of our worship. No one would be any more righteous, in God's sight, if these were shunned.) But we would cringe with shame should they be present when a sinner cries out, due to the stress of soul, desiring to be freed from his sins, especially if the sound of praise should follow, as often happened in times past.

This, in itself, indicates that we lean toward "Jehoram's palace" rather than "Elisha's abode." We are inclined to be more concerned about impressing people than we are about treating the spiritual disease. Therefore, we need to recognize our own weakness, lest the will of our flesh prevails.

A particular concern, should the flesh prevail, is that we are overcome by shame. It can even be to the extent that we despise our own heritage, wherein we ourselves received healing for our spiritual leprosy, because it seems too unsophisticated and base for these modern times. (So it seemed already in Naaman's time.) The contempt is not necessarily voiced, but it is expressed in our actions. This becomes evident when we downgrade and reject the established traditions of our own church and adopt the traditions of some other church. Their church

may supposedly be more refined or more people- and mission-oriented than ours. However, if the church is ineffectual in treating one's spiritual leprosy, it is identified with Jehoram. How then can we adopt its traditions? Jesus specifically warns against this saying: *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. (Matthew 23:3)* They do not because they accomplish nothing, though they zealously go through the motions. Since they lack the Spirit, their works are dead. Let us not be deceived by the "whited sepulchers" that appeal to men.

The "big sinner" has always been the embarrassment of the religious community, as Naaman was to Jehoram. Another example is the incident at Simon's (the Pharisee) house, where Jesus sat at meat and a sinful woman entered, weeping, and sat at His feet (Luke 7:36-50). What an embarrassment to those of the religious community who were also present! Jesus took the occasion to teach the pious ones a lesson of faith and He defends the woman saying, *Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. (Luke 7:47)* And He comforts her saying, *Thy sins are forgiven... Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. (vv. 48, 50)* What was the reaction of the pious ones? *Who is this that forgiveth sins also? (v. 49)* So we see Jehoram was very much alive even at the Pharisee's house.

Let us remember that the "little sinner" has never been a problem in the religious community. In fact, he is the strength of the community, even as this Simon. Therefore, when we conduct our services we need to reevaluate our intentions. We need to determine whether we are really concerned about reaching out to the sinners so that the needs of their souls would be cared for, or whether we are more concerned about catering to the "little sinners," who seek only a godly environment that is pleasing to the eyes and ears and that bolsters their feeling of false security. This requires some soul searching, lest we also be identified with Jehoram rather than Elisha, the man of God who had power to cure leprosy.

Also let us consider, as the account makes known, that there was no fleshly appeal at Elisha's abode. Neither was the honor of men nor the respect of persons recognized, nor were his dedication and achievements considered.

But there was healing for the soul because the Word had preeminence, since it was not overshadowed by the whims of men nor fleshly appeal. Where the Word has preeminence, it will do precisely that for which it was sent: quicken the soul and sustain life. Likewise, this is the function of the Church. I wish to remind the readers that a church that has become so sophisticated and refined that it is inappropriate for a sinner to cry out, due to the stress of his soul, has ceased to function in its primary purpose. The lowly state wherein souls are lifted, as typified by Elisha's abode, is despised.

the late James R. Johnson

August 1988 CM

Submitted by James Kurtti

Reedley, California

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (James 4:10)

Be willing to take your appropriate place in the dust on account of your transgressions. This is to be *in the sight of the Lord*, or before Him. Our sins have been committed against Him; and their principal aggravation, whoever may have been wronged by them, and great as is their criminality in other respects, arises from that consideration. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight...* (Psalm 51:4) Because the Being against whom we have sinned is the only one who can pardon, it is proper that we should humble ourselves before Him with penitent confession.

And he shall lift you up. He will exalt you from the condition of a broken-hearted penitent to that of a forgiven child; He will wipe away your tears, remove the sadness of your heart, fill you with joy, and clothe you with the garments of salvation. This declaration is in accordance with all the promises in the Bible, and with all the facts which occur on the earth, that God is willing to show mercy to the humble and contrite, and to receive those who are truly penitent into His favor.

Albert Barnes

Our Blessed Heritage

APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF KINGSTON

~Brief History~

In 1896, Finnish Christians met in Kingston, Minnesota, to establish a church that would follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. As a result, a constitution was adopted under the Finnish Sunday School Society of Kingston. The society acknowledged that the Bible was the only true, sufficient, and infallible doctrine and standard for Christian faith, teachings, life conduct, and activity, and said that no person should be received into the church who does not believe in being born again and in the remission of sins. The society was also to remain independent and not unite with any other sect or denomination, but remain free according to *Galatians 5:1: Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* Two years after the church was organized, its name was changed to the Apostolic Lutheran Congregation, and in 1987 it was changed to the Apostolic Lutheran Church of Kingston.

The first meeting house was the old Swedish Church, which had been moved from its downtown location. By 1913 the congregation had outgrown it, and the members decided to build a larger church, which was used until 2010. The old meeting house was sold for \$250, moved, and used as a dairy barn. Money for the new church was collected from 54 people in the community. The church was built under contract for \$2,158. The cost of the pews: \$395. The table which the singers sat behind cost \$10, and the floor, made of bird's-eye maple, cost \$66. One Saturday when building the church, the workers propped up the roof before leaving, but over the weekend, the props bowed. The contractor told the church board he would charge \$25 less if they would just leave it, which they did. The bow still exists in the roof.



Finnish was the official language spoken in those early years. Later, services were held in both Finnish and English. Holy Communion was only in Finnish at first; English was added twice a year, increased to six times a year, and later to once a month. Hymns were led by the *lukkari*t (song leaders).

Sunday School in the Finnish language was first held in the homes, and the younger children learned from a Finnish book called the *Aapinen*. Children ages 14 to 17 attended confirmation classes and memorized the entire catechism. Sunday School in the English language was started around 1931. In the early years, church was mostly attended by the older people. Travel was difficult, especially if Ma and Pa had a large family and only one buggy. In church, the men sat on the right side and the women on the left. The middle section was mostly for mothers and children. Offerings were taken by men using a cane pole that had a black velvet bag attached on the end.

God has provided many pastors for our flock in Kingston, and we are grateful for His mercy and blessings. The first minister was Henry Nurmi in the early 1900s, who then shared the pulpit with Peter Pelto until the 1930s. They only spoke in Finnish. When an English-speaking minister was needed, the Rev. Martin Olson helped out. Other ministers have been Alexander Johnson, Arvid Hurula, John Paana, Arnold B. Anderson, Oscar Wilson, George Wilson, Andrew Olson, and Arvi Aho. We were blessed with many long-term visiting pastors who served our congregation during the years we didn't have a full-time pastor. Orval Wirkkala has been the present pastor since 2001.

Pastor Oscar Wilson served our congregation the longest, from 1947 until his death in 1984. We have many fond memories of Oscar. He baptized and confirmed many of us and officiated at many of our children's weddings. The church records show that he conducted 349 baptisms, held 24 confirmation classes, conducted 270 funerals, and officiated at 77 weddings. He grew up in the Kingston area, the eldest son of Casper and Lydia Wilson, and served in the military during World War II. He was ordained into the ministry on May 28, 1948; he married Stella (Sirvio) in 1949 at the Kingston Church. Oscar and Stella had four children: Carmelle, Philip, Rita, and Eric. Besides being our pastor, he was also a farmer. Oscar was

a loving and dedicated pastor who never wavered in his beliefs and upheld the foundation upon which our faith is built. We sincerely thank God that He gave us Oscar Wilson who helped preserve our Christian heritage.

~**Present/Future**~

After a number of years in the planning, in January 2010 our congregation began holding worship services in our new Fellowship Hall, located on 20 acres about one-third mile from the old church. The old church structure is 95 years old and it was badly in need of updating in terms of energy efficiency, handicap accessibility, parking, and kitchen facilities. The old building is now vacant and is being used for storage. The new facility was designed to be built in stages, with the present Fellowship Hall serving as both the sanctuary and dining area. Chairs are used instead of pews in order to facilitate both usages. At such a time that the Lord increases the numbers in our fellowship, the sanctuary will be constructed on the south side of the Fellowship Hall, along with Sunday School rooms.



The Lord has blessed us with this new worship facility for which we are eternally grateful. While we recognize that a building does not constitute the 'church,' nevertheless we realize that it is a shared outward expression of our inward individual experiences in faith. It is not the building that holds us together, but it is the common and shared grace of God in Jesus Christ that has bound us together in love and will continue to do so!

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12)

*May the Lord bless each one of you!
The Kingston Minnesota Congregation*

PORTLAND WINTER SERVICES

The Portland congregation will be hosting our annual winter services March 4-6. Pastor Andrew Kandoll from Champion, Michigan, will be our guest speaker. We invite everyone to come and fellowship with us around God's Word. Our schedule will be as follows:

Friday, March 4	7:30 pm	Evening Worship Service
Saturday, March 5	2:00-5:00 pm	Bible Study
		followed by dinner
	7:30 pm	Evening Worship Service
Sunday, March 6	11:00 am	Morning Worship Service
		followed by lunch
	2:00 pm	Afternoon Worship Service

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. (1 Corinthians 1:17)

*On behalf of the Portland Oregon Congregation,
Burt Farley, Chairman*

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Prayer for Lent

With broken heart and contrite sigh,
A trembling sinner, Lord, I cry:
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free:
O God, be merciful to me.

I smite upon my troubled breast,
With deep and conscious guilt oppressed;
Christ and His cross my only plea:
O God, be merciful to me.

Far off I stand with tearful eyes,
Nor dare uplift them to the skies;
But Thou dost all my anguish see:
O God, be merciful to me.

Nor alms, nor deeds that I have done,
Can for a single sin atone;
To Calvary alone I flee:
O God, be merciful to me.

And when, redeemed from sin and hell,
With all the ransomed throng I dwell,
My raptured song shall ever be,
God has been merciful to me.

Cornelius Elven

—●— The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Psalm 34:18

—●— O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a **broken and a contrite heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Psalm 51:15-17