

LUTHERAN MEN OF AUSTRALIA

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2024 — AUGUST 2024. Lutheran Men's Newsletter is the official publication of the Lutheran Men of Australia and is published four times a year. The next publication will be in September 2024. Articles and men's related news and stories always welcome.



Check our Webpage: <https://www.lca.org.au/ministry-groups/mens-ministry/>

Editor, Keith Munchenberg. Regular Post most welcome, mail to, 18 Winn Circuit Loxton SA 5333. Phone: 0429 773 045. Email address: munchy41@bigpond.com



Dear Lutheran Men of Australia,

I hope this letter finds you all well. I would like to start by thanking both the previous President of the LMA Mr. David Pfeiffer and the previous President of the LMV Trevor Geer for their service to the body of Christ particularly to the men of the LCA of whose roles I have taken on. I would also like to thank all those current and previous members of the committees of the LMA LMV and also the LMSA. My name is Luke Nuske, I am a 34 year old farmer from Panitya Victoria. My

home Church is Bethlehem Lutheran Church Pinnaroo SA, I am married to Rebecca (33) and have four children Reuben 10, Eliana 8, Leora 6 and Aviella 4. I was baptised into the Lutheran Faith in June 1990 by Pastor Andy Gierus and was raised Lutheran (at least nominally, faithfully Christian but nominally Lutheran) and attended church weekly. I was confirmed at 13 and I often joke now, that if I was my pastor then I wouldn't have confirmed me.

As I got further into my teenage years I got more involved with people who were a bad influence on me and regretfully partly due to their influence and my own cowardice followed, and sometimes led them into misbehavior. I knew that I was going down a dark road that would not end well but I saw no way and couldn't conceive any way out of this situation. Between the ages 16 and 18 were particularly bad times for me.

When I was 18 and working for a neighbour on his Turf Farm, regularly and mostly harmlessly drinking substantially too much West End at knock off time, (let's be honest any West End is too much, awful stuff) he invited me to attend a weekly men's study group called "valiant man" at an AOG church in Murray Bridge called "Living Waters" now "Bridge City Church" which I thought sounded odd and I rather arbitrarily responded with a yeah I suppose. Now I could have just as easily said no after all who wants to drive, or catch a ride for two hours on a Wednesday night after work to go and listen to some bloke rattle on before getting KFC for tea, and then heading home again ready for work the next day, possibly the rather sad state of my life helped me to say yes. However this proved to be a turning point for me and a point in my life where I can see in retrospect God working very clearly which is nearly always the way. We can't often see the way God is working in our lives at the time but looking back it regularly becomes much clearer.

At these meetings I met some other young blokes who seemed somewhat normal and yet not, they liked cars and bikes, racing, video games, but they didn't use foul language and didn't speak crudely about women and seemed to have a faith that was real. This made me think this was a true church not like our "dead church" at home. After a while I started attending their youth group in Murray Bridge and eventually Church. I got reasonably involved in church even doing some "preaching" for their "communion messages".

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It was at this church I met my wife Rebecca, the first time we met she thought I was a bogan and a bit of a... well... let's just say arrogant. Our youth "pastor" introduced us; I was wearing a footy guernsey, shorts and skate shoes and was ignoring her looking around for my mates, I don't particularly remember the interaction well and my wife has to remind me periodically. Nevertheless we met again at Melba's Chocolate Factory in Woodside at a youth outing. I noticed her Unity College jacket and asked her if she knew my auntie and cousins who work/attend there and the rest is basically history. Fast forward a few years.

We married in 2010 in the Lutheran Church in Pinnaroo by our Pentecostal Pastor with the Lutheran Pastor doing the sermon (Unionism I think we call it). We were attending an AOG church in Lameroo 40km away and at 2-00pm of all times, giving the pastor time to get there from Murray Bridge. Around August 2011 we were getting sick of travelling to church and the somewhat ridiculous time of church and somewhat discontented with, but unsure why, with Pentecostalism, so we stopped attending church entirely until early 2012 when we started attending my Baptismal Church in Pinnaroo. We had a somewhat, let's say low church pastor at the time who liked contemporary worship, but let's be honest Lutheran contemporary worship is more akin to bad 70s pop than anything contemporary. Nevertheless it was a soft place to land after Hillsong, Bethel soaked low-church Pentecostalism. We attended there for 7 years as Pentecostals. It was only in 2019 when we had a family crisis and had our pastor come out for pastoral care and subsequently invited us to a "young adults Bible study retreat" studying the book of Galatians at Tandara that our journey towards a Lutheran Confession of the faith began.

This retreat held by Creative Word Fellowship was a pivotal event for us, particularly my wife. We saw instead of a youth or young adult event being all about emotionalism and getting worked up to a frenzy, having bands and big name "preachers" telling you "how to hear God's voice" and going home on a high back to the same old same old every day, realising I still couldn't "hear" God's voice and didn't know His purpose for my life. We instead saw an event centred on the study of The Word. We saw young people have a beer or a glass of wine with an open Bible discussing the scriptures, debating, questioning and we heard about this weird thing the book of concord which neither of us had even heard of but my wife quipped that it's the Lutheran "book of Mormon". We left there with a desire to know what all this meant and where these young people got this desire to learn and know God's Word without being "moved by the spirit" (which just means emotionally charged by well selected music).

We began reading our bibles more diligently, my wife says she didn't know what to trust any more so she could only read her Bible. I took a Segway through reformed theology listening to reformed preachers and the like on YouTube (Calvinist primarily) which is very intellectually satisfying, but is not ultimately biblically faithful. We also started listening to Lutheran podcasts and YouTube videos. I slowly started coming around to a Lutheran understanding of scripture seeing it as the most biblically faithful, and is also intellectually satisfying without the pitfalls of the rationalism and enthusiasm that plagues Reformed theology (which is where Pentecostal theology has its roots). So I read the Book of Concord and decided after reading it through that I was a Lutheran not by my baptism or even because I was confirmed Lutheran but because I saw that it was and is the most biblically faithful confession of the faith there is.

This conviction brings with it many challenges especially in the current social and religious climate. When we were Pentecostal we knew people who changed churches for many reasons and we changed churches for convenience, but now we are Lutheran, completely, and so we confess that our teaching has all the fullness of Christ we can have this side of death. And so we confess with St. Peter "where else can we go, You alone have the words of eternal life". So there is no leaving and attending another denomination or church. So while we agree that our brothers and sisters in other denominations may be Christians we also acknowledge that all false teachings strike at Christ because all false teachings deny His Word, and as such they will eventually take root and have the potential to destroy faith.

So it could be seen as a lamentable time to be one who subscribes wholly to the Lutheran Confessions in Australia or indeed in the western world in general. We see our church, led by its Bishops and Bureaucracy, the LCA, a church that was founded on a biblical confession and a unity formed by scriptural agreement laid out in the Theses of Agreement, now ready to formally deny this foundation and change its teaching. Already the promotion of the current teaching of the church is actively suppressed and discouraged and those who promote it are accused of being divisive. It does seem a lamentable position we are in... Our leadership are calling for unity while sowing discord, they are saying peace, peace where there is no peace. ***"For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.*** Jeremiah 6:13-14 ESV

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it".

Matthew 10:34-39

We should be thankful to be living in this time in the church and our culture, the anti-Christian culture is becoming more outwardly godless, our church is being infected by the satanic teachings of the world and our true way forward is being made more and more clear, there is no sitting on the fence. No more placating the darkness for the sake of peace. What fellowship does light have with darkness? **"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."**

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

What are we to do, men of the LCA? Repent. We have failed to lead our wives and children and teach them the Faith. Repent. We have failed to stand up and take the lead and pick up roles in our churches. Repent. We have seen our church failing (or not seen it) for decades, and thought it someone else's problem. Repent. We have put more of our time, money and resources into unnecessary worldly affairs and material comfort than the furtherance of the Gospel. This is the Christian life Repentance and Faith... **"repent and believe in the gospel"** Mark 1:15

We have all failed in this but we have a gracious God who loves us and sent His Son to die for us in our place to forgive us of all of our sins, we have been unfaithful to our wives but Christ is always faithful to His bride the church; we have failed our children but our Heavenly Father never fails His children; we failed our friends and our church but Christ gave His life for His friends John 15:13 and for the Church and washed her clean Eph. 5. Jesus lived the perfect life for you and died the death that you and I deserve and gave us His righteousness and took on our sin. We are baptised into his death and raised into newness of life. Rom. 6

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9

(Something I can recommend that if you are burdened by any sin, go to your pastor ask for private confession, it is a freeing thing to hear your own specific sins be forgiven, and receive the word of absolution from your pastor as the very word of God.)

So what to do now we have repented? Read the Word, Pray the Lord's Prayer, Luther's morning and evening prayer, get back into your catechism. Then pray, pray for your family and your church, pray that God will take a hold of your family who have left the faith who are baptised into His name. Pray that God will renew His church through His word. Pray that God will give you the courage to speak God's Word of truth into a dying church and a dying world; His sheep will hear His voice and follow it. It may be too late for the LCA or it may not be. But it is never too late for Christ's Church. **"And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."**

Matt.16:17-18

I will finish with a Quote I am sure you all know from our churches namesake Dr. Martin Luther.

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason—for I believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves—I consider myself convicted by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. [Here I stand; I can do no other.] God help me. Amen.

Martin Luther

I look forward to seeing you all and meeting some of you in person soon.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
Be with you all. Amen

Luke Nuske

Chairman LMA and LMV

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9



Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ.

Why is it that God doesn't answer our prayers?

Is it because we go on day after day and only when we get into trouble that we then turn to God in prayer.

People talk about mental health and troubled minds.

God has given us so much in this country. When was the last time we got a piece of paper and wrote down what we are thankful for, thanking God for a devoted wife, or a loving husband who cares for us. For our children and grandchildren. Are we aware of our blessings, or do we take them for granted?

We can thank Jesus that He will never leave us or forsake us.

Reading God's Word encourages us in our daily walk. The Holy Spirit inspires us in our appreciation of God's wonderful ways.

Why is it that those people who do not have three meals a day, often appreciate what God has done for them, more than we do?

To walk daily in a personal relationship with Jesus as our guide, we come to understand the will of God and pray accordingly.

Colossians chapter 2; 6-10. "Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no-one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world and not according to Christ. For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily and you have been filled in Him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (ESV)

If we put Jesus Christ in our lives, we will desire to be thankful and encourage others to thank God for all things as well. This can bring great joy when we give God the honour and it can also bring us peace of mind.

May the blessings of God encourage you all.

Yours in Christ.

Colin Schutz vice president of LMSA

Turbulent and Trying Times - Kym Gladigau LMA SA President



In this edition you'll find the invitation to the LMA SA Convention. Once again kindly hosted at St John's Woodside Lutheran Church. This is the home Congregation of recently retired LMA President David Pfeiffer. It's also the sister Congregation to Spring Head Trinity Lutheran Church, my home Congregation. At the time of writing, we are a few weeks away from farewelling our Pastor, Rev Tim Castle Schmidt as he has taken a call to Waverly-Nunawading in Victoria. By the time Convention comes around on July 6 he will be settling into his new home.

So our Parish, Onkaparinga, will be in vacancy and as many of you have experienced in your congregations and parishes that could be for at least 1 or 2 or maybe more years. For us as lay leaders this is causing some angst as to how we'll cope also given the demand on retired pastors being enormous.

Meanwhile over the last few months we've learned of the LCA plan to move from North Adelaide and sell off the assets including the ALC site. We have all grown up with North Adelaide being our "mecca" so to speak, the home of our church in Australia. Again, for many of us worry and angst as we have no idea what the future holds. How and where will the Pastors and church leaders be trained?

The LLL is undergoing enormous change too. You may have been changing your banking arrangements, as our farm is, because our money won't be at call from June 30. It's a bit of a worry too as we knew that every dollar that we deposited in the LLL was assisting in supporting the work of the Lutheran Church in Australia. How will the LLL be able to support the Church in the future as many of us will only be able to deposit "spare" money in there?

The Cost-of-Living crisis is affecting so many people within our communities. It doesn't make much sense, does it? There is such a shortage of workers across the board and we have almost full employment, yet people can hardly afford to rent a house, let alone buy one. I'm so thankful to God that both of my children were able to buy homes before values soared. There are refugees and immigrants from troubled countries coming into our communities too. It's so hard for them settling into a new life. Lutheran Care is playing its part in supporting struggling families. The demand for their services seems to only increase. Ironically, I'm listening to the Country Hour catch-up as I write this and hearing that Australian Wagyu steak is being served in American Restaurants for US\$1000 a serve. It's a crazy world isn't it?

Back to **Convention, Saturday July 6 2024 at St Johns Woodside**, 137 Onkaparinga Valley Road.

We've Rev. Dr. Tim Stinger, Principal of ALC, Rev Adrian Kitson, First Assistant Bishop and also a representative from both The LLL and also Lutheran Care to share with you their views on the future. The Challenges and Blessings that they see God leading us through. Come along with your questions and concerns.

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 28 vs 20b "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age"

Lutheran Men of South Australia - Convention

St John's Lutheran Church and Hall

Woodside - Saturday July 6 2024

Real Grace, Real Life, Real Community

8.30am Registration + Tea and Coffee - welcome 9.15

9.30am Presentation by Rev Dr. Tim Stringer – Principal ALC

Leading Bible study then covering changes at ALC, Moving from North Adelaide, Future learning

10.30am Morning Tea

11.00am Presentation by Rev. Adrian Kitson – First Assistant Bishop

What is happening within the District, Coping with increased vacancies? Adrian is the Pastor at St Petri Lutheran in Nuriootpa and is involved with "Shed Happens" in the Barossa. Each month around 100 men meet for a BBQ in a large shed. What makes this popular with Barossa men?

12.00noon Lunch

1.30pm Presentation by Lutheran Care. Transitioned from Lutheran Community

Care. What is Lutheran Care now? What is happening around Adelaide? How are People coping with the cost of housing and the cost-of-living crisis? Should we be accepting so many Immigrants and how can Lutheran Care respond to the demand?

2.30pm Presentation by LLL. Big changes from July1. What does the future hold for the LLL? How will the LLL continue to support the LCA?

3.00pm AGM

3.30 Closing Worship – including Communion and an offering for LMA Projects

4.00 Vote of Thanks & Farewell

Contact RSVP by July 4th to Kym Gladigau (0414)59 66 22

Email kym.iris@bigpond.com

(Please note the timetable may change to suit availability of speakers)



'If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. If you look at God, you'll be at rest'

– **Corrie Ten Boom.**

"You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have."

– **Corrie Ten Boom**

"Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tyre?"

– **Corrie Ten Boom**

CAMBODIA CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

My last report in the March newsletter told of the progress made with the printing and distribution of 120,000 copies of The Best News Ever. The next print run for this book is currently being negotiated. You may recall that the decision to print the text in both English and Khmer has made a huge difference in where the books can be distributed. Free distribution of the books into government schools is welcomed as a teaching aid to help Cambodians learn English, the language spoken by a majority in the world.

Years ago Con Schlenk had a wish to produce a book that covered the important events in Christ's life on earth. Several years in the making, we have come up with The Mango Tree. This time, to make it universally appealing (at least initially), there is no Christian theme until you get to page three! Again we lashed out with an initial 60,000 copy print run and despite only becoming available on 24 April, 15,000 copies have already been distributed. Naturally the bilingual format is used again.



Some of you readers will have had the opportunity to meet Charia and her family when I brought them out to Australia for three weeks last October. Charia's two sisters also live in the three storey family home in Phnom Penh and are an invaluable help to Charia in the day to day household activities. This year I intend to bring them both out to Australia as a thank you for their contribution to the smooth running of Cambodia Children's Ministry. One of the sisters, Mariane, provides me with detailed monthly cash flow data so I can keep tabs on finances, making sure sponsors funds are all spent wisely. Sponsors funds are not used for these family holidays.

I am also pleased to report that the group B teacher trainers have completed the first of six one-day training sessions scattered over the rest of this year. Charia passes on her amazing teaching and child handling skills to these teacher trainers who take that training back to the teachers in the provinces from which they come. The first group (group A) who came from half of Cambodia's provinces, started their training before Covid interruptions but eventually finished last year. When their training is completed these specialist teacher trainers will need to gather together periodically in future to have further bonding, updating and support together. Despite not being cheap to cover travelling costs, accommodation and food for these people, our sponsors continue to support this venture which they see as useful and very practical.

My continued thanks go to the LMA members who continue to support Cambodia Children's Ministry through prayer and purse and I'm grateful to have met and worshipped together with some of you at the Lutheran Men of Victoria retreat last March.

Tim Fischer
tfischer@ozemail.com.au 0417 141 004



LUTHERAN MEN OF VICTORIA TANDARA CAMP 2024



Pastor Carl Thiele led the study titled 'Fellowship-What does this mean?'

Everyone concentrating.



The after dinner speaker was Tim Fisher, coordinator of 'Cambodia Children's Ministry'.





The Lutheran Men of Australia Executive 2024-2027

Left to Right. Ross Roll, Treasurer. David Pfeiffer, Vice-President. Luke Nuske, President. Josh Koop, Extra member. Keith Munchenberg, Secretary, Editor.



The Lutheran Men of Victoria Executive 2024

Left to Right. Trevor Geer, Vice-President. Ross Roll, Treasurer. Eric Horneman, Secretary. Luke Nuske, President. Wayne Werner, Extra Member. Josh Koop, Extra Member. Clem Paech, Extra Member.



NURTURING YOUR FAITH: Called by God

This Bible study in the Nurturing Your Faith series focuses on our calling as Christians by God into the body of Christ. To do this we will look at Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We will consider God calling us to faith from unbelief through His Word, through Baptism, through Holy Communion, and through the witness of other Christians who, upon hearing their call to share the faith, were instrumental in our receiving of God's gracious gift of faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Then it is our turn: as Christians, we, too, have the responsibility—the privilege—to share the Good News of Jesus with others.

CALLED FROM THE WORLD

The letter to the Ephesians, one of four "captivity letters," is typically grouped with Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon and attributed to Paul's ministry output while imprisoned in Rome in the late 50s/early 60s of the first century. In this six-chapter epistle to Gentile believers, he articulates God's work in

extending His call beyond the Jews. "In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will" (1:4b5a). This is an adoption that Paul says is made available to those who were "separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (2:12b).

For all those Gentiles (non-Jews) throughout the world, this is some very good news: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (2:13b-14). This is the call to faith God has extended to each and every one of us. From Abraham (see Genesis 11:27-12:9) and Moses (see Exodus 3-4) to David (see 1 Samuel 16) and the prophets, God has been calling us—to turn to Him, to repent and lay down our lives, to trust in the knowledge that, as Paul so eloquently says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (1:7).

Called—do you feel called by God? Can you "put a finger on" when it was that God called you? How did your life begin to change once you understood you were called by God?

Do you think it's possible to be called by God—and miss it? How might that happen—how might we miss a calling from God? If you missed a calling, do you think God re-issues another?

Do you think God makes dramatic calls to people today like those recorded in the Old and New Testaments? Can you give an example of such?

GOD-GIVEN NEWNESS

There is a unity and oneness that accompanies the call of God on our lives. That is, God's Spirit works through His Word, our Baptism, and Holy Communion to bring us to faith. Empowered by God at work in our lives, we are not to be conformed to this world but instead, transformed, renewed—new creations, messengers of reconciliation, ambassadors for Christ (see Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21). And with this calling—this summons from God to a new life—we are changed, but first we must die to ourselves and any hope of making ourselves righteous before Him. Paul writes, "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:19-20).

Paul's letters attest that he was all-in when it came to his new life in Christ—no matter what the worldly consequences. The impact of his call was such that for the sake of the Gospel, he could press on and endure in a manner like Jesus, even to the point of physical pain (see Galatians 6:17). "I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (4:1-6).

Do the Christians you know seem to take their callings seriously? How does the life of a Christian who takes his or her calling seriously differ from those Christians who are nonchalant about their calling?

How far down into our lives should our callings go? Do they leave any room for us and our personal likes and dislikes? Does a calling from God prevent the individual from being "true to themselves" in their own personal interests? Can we prepare ourselves beforehand (study, practice, learning a skill) that God may then include in our calling?

How can we act on our calling to ensure we are following God's will for our lives? While God's calling is a singular event of sorts, it's also something we act on throughout our lives. How do we participate in our calling to ensure we are daily seeking to follow God as He leads?

ENTERING HIS SERVICE

Our calling to faith necessitates a new perception from us. Though welcomed by God into His family and blessed with eternal salvation, it's not all about us. God works through people in our lives (Luther's "masks of God" or the concept of God working through people's vocations) to further His kingdom on earth. As Christians, we are to be conscientious of the life we live as Jesus-followers; the call we received demands our best and to give it unstintingly.

At times our calling will require sacrifice, helping a colleague or friend or stranger who may need our assistance. In these individuals, too, God can be masked, as Dr. Gene Veith reminds us: "If we are masks of God, even when we do not realize it, it is also true that God is masked in our neighbour. Particularly when our neighbour is in need—when he or she is sick, hungry, thirsty, naked, a prisoner, a stranger—Christ Himself is hidden. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren,' the Lord says, 'ye have done it unto Me' (Matthew 25:40)." Paul wants no less than for every believer to share this mindset of Christ. "That according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (3:16-19).

Called by God—that seems like a huge thing—what can you do in your life to serve others (in the meantime) when your particular call may be unknown or unclear to you?

How might Paul have felt thwarted at times from fulfilling his mission as an apostle? How might he have "gotten around" difficult circumstances to continue his work? What were the tools and resources Paul used to stay close to God, to hear Him, to continually recognize the direction God wanted him to go?

Loving others is central to the Christian life regardless of our day-by-day situation. Is loving others a calling? What might that look like? Our callings should not become a reason to boast. How do we make sure that even when our calling is received/accepted we love others as Christ loved us?

The called life is one that walks in the light; it comprehends the new life God gives us and acts accordingly, seeking to love and serve God while loving and serving our neighbours. As Paul says, it's "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might" (1:18-19).

Being called by God is both a calling to something (God, others) and a calling away from something (self, world). It's God gracing our lives with the opportunity to serve Him as a member of the body of Christ. It's also realizing He has already ordained great things for us to do in the service of that body. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (2:10).



PRAY

Heavenly Father, that You would call us to serve You is a profound mystery. Nevertheless, we accept Your gracious calling and, empowered by the example of Jesus and the indwelling of Your Holy Spirit, seek to live lives worthy of Your Son, our Lord and Savior. In His Name we pray. Amen.

Pastor s Pondering

Salvation for Israel



For Orthodox Jews, there's an obsession with rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. The first temple was built by King Solomon and destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. After 70 years' captivity in Babylon, some of the Jews were able to return to Israel and rebuilt the temple, only to have it destroyed centuries later by the Romans in 70 A.D.. The Jewish Talmud predicts that when the temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem, then the Messiah will come to his people, deliver them, and reign with his people.

For some Christians with views of a Millennium, which they get from an interpretation of a literal thousand-year rule of Christ on earth (Revelation 20), this fits well with the Jewish hope of a third temple and the future earthly reign of the Messiah.

For Lutherans and most mainstream Christians, the thousand years of Revelation is not to be understood literally, but like many of the

references in Revelation, it is to be interpreted symbolically, and in this instance, taken as a long period of time. Revelation says that after this long period of time the devil "must be set free for a short time" to "deceive the nations", before the great battle and the return of the Lord Jesus for judgement. Most consider this 'long period', the time following the ascension of Jesus, and the unhindered spread of Christianity, before a short time of persecution and the end of history as we know it.

The problem for Orthodox Jews today when it comes to rebuilding the temple, is that on the holy mount there in Jerusalem, where the other two temples once stood, now stands the Dome of the Rock, which is a holy site for all Moslems. They're not going to give up this site or allow it to be destroyed. I think this is a permanent sign from God that any hopes of a physical third temple will never be realized. This reality should cause Jews to re-examine their own scriptures and especially listen to what Christians have to say about all of this.

The prophet Isaiah said, "You will leave your name to my chosen ones as a curse, and the Sovereign Lord will put you to death, but to his servants he will give another name". (Isaiah 65:15) I don't think any nation in the history of the world has ever suffered as much as the people of Israel. The Bible tells us that whenever they went astray, God sent droughts and invading armies to call them back to himself. According to the scripture if the people had been faithful to God, the first two temples would not have been destroyed. From the New Testament onwards, the people of Israel have been a heavily persecuted people. Just think of the Second World War! Why is this so? Maybe the same principle is being applied as in the Old Testament. The people had forgotten God. They'd missed his Messiah when he came. "John says, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him, but to those who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave them the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent...but born of God". (John 1:11-13)

The Jews today are not God's chosen people! Isaiah said that God would leave their name upon them as a curse. He would be the one who would put them to death. God promised Abraham that his descendants would bring blessing to all nations. (Genesis 12:2-3) That blessing would culminate in the person of Jesus whose human genealogy goes back to Abraham. (Matthew 1:17) Jesus confronted the Pharisees of his day who proudly claimed they were God's chosen people and descendants of Abraham. (John 8:39) Jesus told them that if they were truly the children of Abraham, they would do the things Abraham did. "Abraham rejoiced when he thought of seeing my day." (John 8:56) "If you were God's children, you would love me", said Jesus. (John 8:42)

Isaiah said to his own people, "You will be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord will give you" (Isaiah 62:2), and so God's chosen people are called Christians, and the name of Jew is upon God's once chosen people as a curse. (Isaiah 65:15)

The apostle Peter declares to us, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people". (1 Peter 2:9). The Promised Land, for which Hamas and Israel are now fighting is not a physical country but "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade, kept for you in heaven." (1 Peter 1:4) And what about a third temple, although it's never mentioned as such in scripture? Paul writes, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you, whom you received from God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19) From the Day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God has built his dwelling place in the hearts of believers. You are that third temple□You are God's chosen people□The new name for God's chosen ones is 'Christian'. We can only pray there may be more Jewish Christians and Palestinian Christians. If that were the case Israel's history may have been very different.

Pastor Peter Geyer.