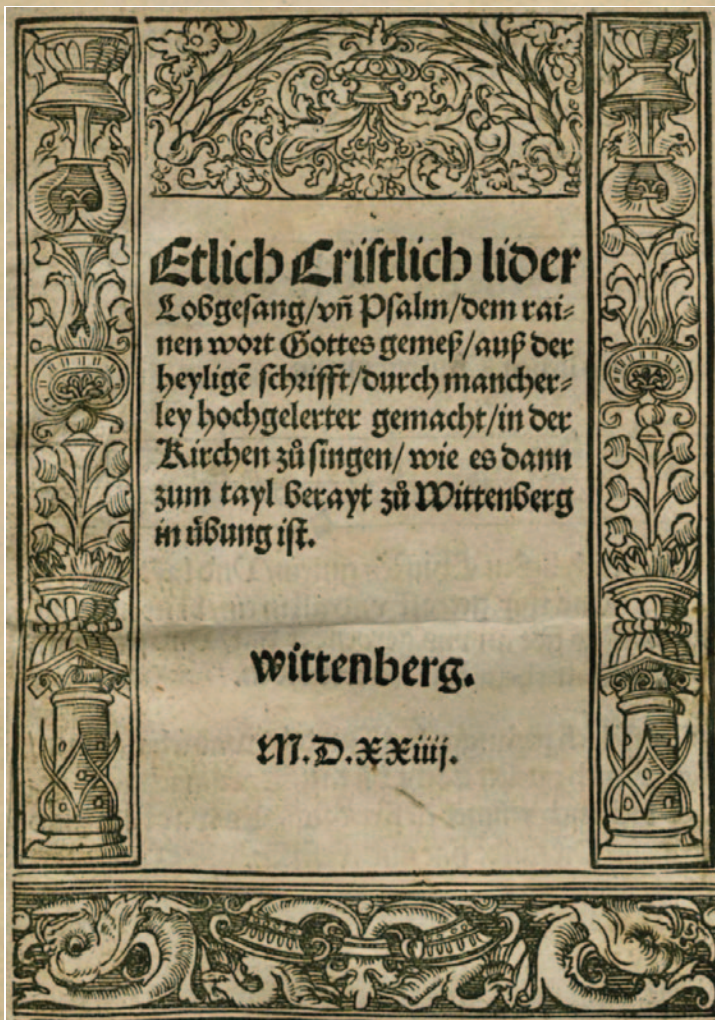


THE BRITISH LUTHERAN



500 Years of Lutheran Hymns



From the Chairman: “The Other Guy”

*Rev. George Samiec
Chairman of the ELCE*

LATE ONE EVENING, AS I WAS ON MY way home, I visited the police. My chaplaincy to them has evolved to visiting often and inevitably quite briefly. As I walked in two officers looked at me quite intently. “What happened to you?!” I was momentarily stumped until I saw that they were looking slightly above me – at my forehead – and yes, I remembered that I had there the mark of an ashen cross. “You OK? Been in an altercation?”

I thought but didn’t say, “You should see the other guy!” That’s how we want to portray ourselves: knowledgeable, in control, and if in a fight – even if battered – the winner. Instead I replied that it was ‘Ash Wednesday’

and Lent was beginning in the Christian Church, when we spend time observing Jesus go to the cross, and considering why He did. And so I had a brief moment to say something about how our sin and death are beaten by Jesus on the cross to have the last word.

It was only later that the thought came to me that the world should ‘see the other guy’! In fact, that’s what Christian discipleship and Christian ministry is all about: seeing and following this ‘other guy’.

What this phrase implies is that while I might be cut or bruised in the altercation, the other guy is far worse off. How true that is for our salvation!

Human nature is an enemy of God

and it fights him even though it is dead and blind (Ephesians 2:1; 5:8). Jesus didn’t ask our permission to rescue us and give us life with him. Rather, Jesus entered ‘enemy territory’ – but territory still so loved by God – and battled our sin and pride and the forces of darkness in our world of sin and injustice.



While Jesus’ victory on the cross is hidden from our sight (“his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance” [Isaiah 52:14]), it is declared to our ears: “Jesus said, ‘It is finished’ and gave up his spirit” (John 19:30).

Death didn’t kill Jesus. Jesus was in control and gave up his spirit on that cross, “disarming the rulers and authorities and putting them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Colossians 2:15) so that we be forgiven.

When the words “dust to dust, ashes to ashes” are said over us, they will

not be describing our demise, or declare us ‘down for the count’, defeated, but rather our movement from perishable to imperishable, from dishonour to glory, from weakness to power, from a natural body to a spiritual body in Christ (1 Corinthians 15: 42–44).

You *should* see the other guy – because that other guy is Jesus! Consider who Jesus is and what He did on earth and ultimately on the cross. May the whole world come to see this other guy through worship, song, and art, and ultimately lifted high on the cross. Why is he there? FOR YOU!

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ON THE COVER



'Achtliederbuch', Title Page
The first Lutheran hymnal

It Is Good to Sing Hymns

That it is good to sing hymns is, I think, known to every Christian; for everyone is aware not only of the example of the prophets and kings in the Old Testament who praised God with song and sound, with poetry and psaltery, but also of the common and ancient custom of the Christian church to sing Psalms. St Paul himself instituted this in 1 Corinthians 14 and exhorted the Colossians to sing spiritual songs and Psalms heartily unto the Lord so that God's Word and Christian teaching might be instilled and implanted in many ways.

Therefore, I, too, in order to make a start and to give an incentive to those who can do better, have with the help of others compiled several hymns, so that the holy gospel which now by the grace of God has risen anew may be noised and spread abroad.

Thus opened Martin Luther's preface to one of the very first hymn books to come out of Wittenberg 500 years ago. Little could Luther have realised, on the basis of such a modest beginning, the magnitude of the impact it would have on Christendom.

As you can read in Thomas Winger's history of Lutheran hymnals (p. 6), Luther's call to others to pick up the pen and write hymns did not go unheeded, and hymns and hymn books began to proliferate in the Lu-

theran church – and with them, congregational singing.

Even though there was opposition to the singing of anything other than Psalms in many branches of the Reformation (the Church of England did not relent on this point until the 19th century), even there the singing of metrical Psalms meant that both poets and composers set to work on crafting texts and tunes that put the Word of God in the mouths as well as ears of congregations.

While hymn-singing is as old as the Scriptures, the Lutheran Reformation restored it to a pride of place in a way that has transformed Christian worship across every denomination and tradition of the Church.

* * *

Music, and especially song, is one of God's richest gifts to His people. Luther famously placed music as "next to theology" as the highest of God's gifts:

I am so overwhelmed by the diversity and magnitude of its virtue and benefits that I can find neither beginning nor end for my discourse.

The combination of poetry and song proved to be the most powerful means by which congregations learned the biblical doctrines of the Reformation. Indeed, writing nearly a century after the publication of the first Lutheran

hymnal, a German Jesuit by the name Adam Contzen lamented that “Martin Luther had destroyed more souls with his hymns than with all his writing and preaching.” While we disagree with Contzen’s assessment of the benefits of Luther’s teaching, he was no doubt right about the power of hymns to teach and to instil the faith in the singing congregation.

Contzen was also right about something else: the powerful combination of poetry and music can be a source of danger to Christians. It is not only the truth but also falsehood that can be propagated by well-crafted songs.

To a preface to a later hymnal, Luther added the following little rhyme:

*Many false masters now new
hymns indite*

*Be on your guard and judge them
aright.*

*Where God is building his church
and word,*

*There comes the devil with lies
and sword.*

It is no an overstatement to say that what Christians sing, both at home and at church, it is a matter of sickness and health, perhaps even life and death. Our faith is being formed by what we sing; yet we are frequently motivated by more than just a desire for pure theology in our choices. A rousing or beautiful tune, a song that brings back strong memories, an emo-

tional setting: all these and more can get our juices running – even to the detriment of theological judgement.

Indeed, many of the great hymns of the Church, beginning in the early centuries of Christianity, were written to guard Christians against false doctrines being promoted by other hymns, written by false teachers.

To guard against such dangers, the publication of hymnals – collections of hymns carefully selected, examined and approved by the church – is a great treasure as well as a wall of protection.

As we read the history of English-language Lutheran hymnals (p. 11), we give thanks to God

both for the gift of singing, and for the work of those who have devoted their efforts to selecting the very best work of writers, translators, composers and arrangers from the whole span of Christian history, so that we may sing confidently not only the songs of our times, but also in unison with Christians from every century.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you
richly, teaching and admonishing
one another in all wisdom, singing
psalms and hymns and spiritual
songs, with thankfulness in your
hearts to God.*

(Colossians 3:16)

*Rev. Tapani Simojoki,
Editor*





The Joy of Lutheranism: The Birth of Lutheran Hymnals

*Rev. Dr. Thomas Winger
President of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary,
St. Catharines, Ontario; former tutor at Westfield House*

THE GENIUS OF LUTHERANISM MAY be our clear teaching of justification by grace through faith in Christ alone. But the joy of Lutheranism is our hymns! This year, as part of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation celebrations, we remember the first Lutheran hymnals, published in 1524.

Hymn-singing has been part of God's worship since the Old Testament. The book of Psalms is a hymnal within the Bible. The Psalms were used in Temple and Synagogue services, and naturally remained a part of early Christian worship. St. Paul called for Christians to 'be filled up in the Spirit, speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and songs of the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18-19). These 'hymns and songs' may have included biblical canticles, such as we find in Luke 1-2 and sing in Matins and Vespers. But most likely the early Christians also expressed their faith in hymns of their own making.

Hymnody flourished for centuries, particularly in monasteries; however, sadly, there was little congregational hymn-singing in the chief Sunday service by the high Middle Ages.

Early Lutherans saw an opportunity to spread the Gospel by reviving

congregational song. Luther seems to have got the idea from the popular practice of news ballads. Singers would put the news into rhyme and sing it to the people in town squares and inns, then print up the song on a broadsheet to post in public.

In 1523 Luther imitated them by writing a sober tribute to two followers who had been martyred in Brussels. His ballad, 'A New Song We Now Begin', wasn't really a hymn, but it sparked the brilliant idea of spreading the Gospel through song. In the preface to an early hymnal he wrote, "I ... have with the help of others compiled several hymns, so that the holy Gospel which now by the grace of God has risen anew may be set forth and given free course" (Luther's Works 53:316).

*The reformers sang the pure
Gospel into people's hearts*

In the years 1523-26 Luther threw all his energy into reforming worship. In his revision of the Latin mass (1523) he called for vernacular songs for the people to sing between the Epistle and Gospel (the Hymn of the Day) and

during Communion distribution. He encouraged poets and musicians to find a unique German way to match words to music. Luther accepted his own challenge and wrote 24 of his lifetime output of 36 hymns in just one year! In his German Mass (1526) he added the idea of singing the major texts of the liturgy in hymn paraphrases (e.g. his creed hymn, ‘We All Believe in One True God’, LSB 954). But we’re getting ahead of the story.

In January 1524 an enterprising printer gathered together eight hymns that had been recently printed on broadsheet and published the first Lutheran hymnal. Known popularly as the *Achtliederbuch* (‘Eight Hymn Book’), it contained four hymns by Luther, three by his colleague Paul

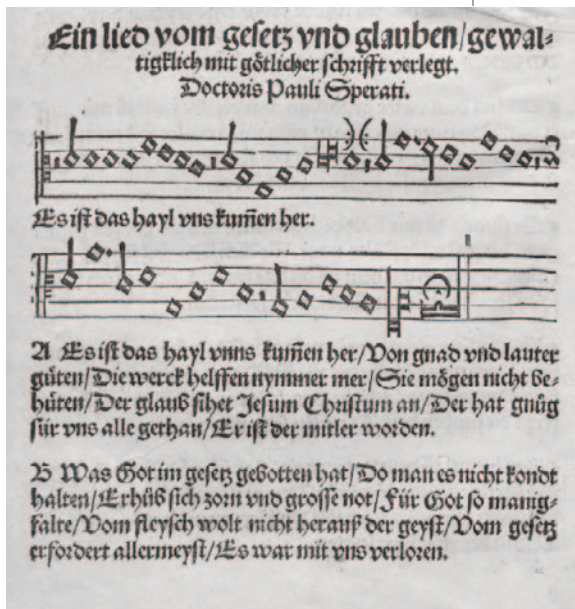
Speratus, and one anonymous. Remarkably, three of these hymns are still in use:

- ‘Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice’ (LSB 556)
- ‘Salvation Unto Us Has Come’ (LSB 555)
- ‘From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee’ (LSB 607)

The first two tell the epic tale of our salvation, from the tragedy and helplessness of our sinful condition to God’s sending forth His Son in the flesh to redeem us. They teach the distinction between Law and Gospel, and are spectacular illustrations of how the reformers sang the pure Gospel into people’s hearts.

The third hymn is Luther’s paraphrase of Psalm 130. Putting the Psalms into rhyming verse was a Lutheran innovation that would come to be copied by the Calvinists and lies at the heart of Anglican hymnody. What was unique about the Lutheran approach was how they wove the Psalm’s deeper Christological meaning into the paraphrase.

Getting even a tiny booklet of hymns into the hands of the people was revolutionary. But the larger collections published later that year more deservedly bear the title of ‘hymnal’. The *Erfurt Enchiridion* introduced among its 25 hymns the Advent favourite, ‘Saviour of the



Extract from the ‘Achtliederbuch’:
Salvation unto Us Has Come (LSB 555)



'Luther in the Circle of His Family' (Gustav Spangenberg, 1875)

Photo: [wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luther_in_the_Circle_of_His_Family.jpg)

Nations, Come' (LSB, 332), the Communion hymn 'O Lord, We Praise Thee' (LSB 617), and Luther's translation of the mediæval Pentecost hymn, 'Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord' (LSB 497). A Wittenberg hymnal that year included 32 hymns, with a companion choir book containing four-part choral settings. An explosion of hymn writing had been sparked.

The titles of many early Lutheran hymnals emphasised the twin themes of 'teaching' and 'comfort'. Hymns were part of the overall programme of reforming the church through God's Word. Lutheran hymns could be

strongly doctrinal, but they also served the liturgy by letting the people sing parts that previously were sung only

Putting the Psalms into rhyming verse was a Lutheran innovation

by choirs made up of clergy (or school-boys). Hymns were deliberately written for each season of the church year and

arranged that way in the hymnals.

Countless Psalm paraphrases gave voice to Christian piety and faith by bringing the ancient texts into contemporary Christian lives—'A Mighty Fortress' (LSB 656), which turned Psalm 46 into a battle cry against their devilish foes, is the most famous example.

Perhaps hymns were part of the Reformation's genius, too!



How We Got Our Hymn Book: The History of ELCE Hymnals

Rev. Dr. Paul J. Grime

Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Mission, Dean of Spiritual Formation
and Dean of the Chapel at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

From the beginning of its existence as an independent church in 1954, the ELCE has had a very close relationship with her 'mother church', the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). One aspect of this close relationship is that we have used hymnals and other English-language liturgical resources produced in LCMS: The Lutheran Hymnal, Lutheran Worship and Lutheran Service Book. Less well-known is the history of how these hymnals came to be. Here, the chairman of the committee that produced the Lutheran Service Book outlines the history of Lutheran hymnals in the LCMS and, hence, the ELCE.

FIVE. THAT'S THE TOTAL NUMBER OF official hymnals of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in its nearly 173-year history. Of those five, only the first was in German, published the same year as the Synod's founding in 1847. That hymnal would serve multiple generations of German-speaking Lutherans in North America.

It was inevitable, however, that worship in the LCMS would eventually move to English. That first happened unofficially when the English Synod, a sister church body, produced *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book (ELHB)* in 1889, with an important update just a few years later in 1892.

Two decades later, a major expansion of *ELHB* coincided with the merging of the English Synod into the Missouri Synod; the merger took place in 1911, with the new hymnal published

in 1912 under the same name—the Synod's first official English-language hymnal. The timing was fortuitous, given that World War I broke out just two years later, which accelerated the process of German Americans switching to English.

The transition from German to English would take several decades, but by the 1930s nearly all LCMS congregations had at least occasional services in English. Surprisingly, as they introduced services in English, many congregations chose not to use *ELHB* as well as they might have. This resulted in what one writer at the time called "liturgical chaos."

That chaos moved in the direction of significant conformity with the publication of *The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)* in 1941, the Synod's second official English-language hymnal. Published



From left to right: The Lutheran Hymnal, Lutheran Worship, and Lutheran Service Book

just months before the United States entered World War II, *TLH* served as a unifying factor in the Synod's worship life. As a joint effort with other confessional Lutheran churches, *TLH* had a broad reach, especially among Lutherans of a more conservative stance. It also served as the de facto official first hymnal of the ELCE.

During the 1960s, the LCMS moved briefly in a more ecumenical direction through participation in a joint hymnal project with the other major Lutheran bodies in North America. Through various twists and turns, this process gave the LCMS *Lutheran Worship* (*LW*), published in 1982. That hymnal, its third English-language hymnal, was hampered by hasty preparation and the lack of adequate field-testing. As a result, many congregations on both sides of the Atlantic chose not to adopt it, staying instead with *TLH*.

Besides having a new hymnal with which many in the LCMS were not satisfied, the 1980s were a time of significant upheaval in worship practices with the advent of new forms of worship and styles of music. Some LCMS congregations began moving away from the use of any hymnal; additionally, numerous supplements of hymns and songs were adopted for use. More liturgical chaos.

In the midst of this upheaval, the LCMS Commission on Worship announced in early 1997 that it would begin work on a new hymnal, and, having learned its lesson from *LW*, would devote a decade to the development of the new hymnal in order to garner adequate feedback from the congregations.

The project launched first with the publication of *Hymnal Supplement 98*, a small resource that hinted at several goals for the new hymnal, namely, a

more user-friendly layout and also standard hymn harmonisations, something that *LW* lacked.

Development of the new hymnal began in December 1998 and came to a conclusion in March 2004 with the final proposal for that summer's Synod convention. Work on what would later be named *Lutheran Service Book* (*LSB*) was divided among four major committees: Liturgy, Hymnody, Lectionary, and Agenda. There was also a fifth committee, Language and Translations, that examined the work of the other committees in order to guarantee a uniformity of style, as well as to determine which Bible translation to use for the project.

Over the course of the five-plus years of development, each of those committees met four or five times a year, for an average of a committee meeting every two weeks! While mostly composed of LCMS members, with members of the Lutheran

Church—Canada provided yeoman's service on two of the committees, including Thomas Winger on the Liturgy Committee. For much of that time the latter was teaching at Westfield House in Cambridge and certainly had his ear to the ground of the ELCE in those days.

Lutheran Service Book, the fourth and most recent English-language hymnal of the LCMS, was approved in convention in 2004 with a vote of 88% in favour. After two years of development, the hymnal was finally published in August 2006. The following year, the ELCE Synod decided to adopt *LSB*.

To date, *LSB* has sold well over one million copies. Concordia Publishing House estimates that it is used in over 80% of LCMS congregations. In addition to the hymnal, there are nearly twenty supporting volumes and editions, including eBook and electronic worship planning editions.



ELCE pastors met for Barnes Conference at Luther-Tyndale Memorial Church on 6–7 February. Also pictured Mr. Pete Myers, who joined the pastors for the study portions of the conference.

NEWS FROM THE ELCE

INTO ALL THE WORLD

News from the Board for Overseas Missions

Joanna Passmore and Helena Simons

Jesus commissioned His disciples:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19–20)

The purpose of the Board for Overseas Missions (BOM) is to enable the spreading of the Gospel overseas by distributing funds generously donated by individuals and congregations in the ELCE. These contributions have been instrumental in funding initiatives, such as publishing books, the training of pastors and, most recently, providing a much-needed motor-bike for the Lutheran Church in Ghana. We would like to share with you the projects that your donations have supported over the last few years.

The Lutheran Heritage Foundation

The ELCE has supported the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF) with many projects over the years. In 2019 we received a request for copies of the ELCE's Lutheran Reformation Anniversary Edition Bibles, to be given to Lutheran pastors and evangelists in Africa. African Lutheran churches are growing rapidly but pastors and other teachers often lack teaching resources, especially key Lutheran texts. The LHF translation centre in Nairobi arranges the translation and distribution of books to churches in several countries across Africa. The churches are often in hard-to-reach places, which makes the distribution of teaching materials particularly challenging. The LHF translation centre also hosts seminars for translators, pastors and other church workers.



The BOM managed to source 60 Bibles, which were sent to pastor Tuomo Simojoki. The first Bibles were received in October 2021 by Archbishop Oscar Ulotu from the Lutheran Church of East Africa, a confessional Lutheran church in Tanzania, whilst he was visiting LHF in Nairobi.

In the following year, more Bibles were donated to various dioceses of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya (ELCK). The ELCK covers a wide geographical area. Currently, the ELCK consists of more than 100,000 members, who worship in more than 700 congregations,



Left: Rev. Ngare (left) and Rev. Dachi (middle) from the ELCK South-West Diocese and Pastor Tuomo Simojoki on the right. Right: At the South Lake Diocese, near Lake Victoria in Western Kenya, in March 2022.



Bibles gratefully received by the leadership of the ELCM at the LHF translation centre in Nairobi, Kenya

organised into six dioceses. The work of ELCK includes over 17 ethnic communities.

Pastor Ngare and Pastor Dachi had asked Pastor Tuomo Simojoki whether he might be able to get them the Augsburg Confession in some form, to help them to teach it to the congregations they serve. Pastor Simojoki writes: “Imagine their surprise and delight when I could hand them these gifts from the ELCE then and there! I was asked to sign the Bibles, to commemorate the occasion.”

Bibles were also gratefully received by bishop Moses Okoyo. Dr. Okoyo is a renowned teacher in the ELCK, having worked both as a guest lecturer in many areas and taught at the seminary for a long time. Dr. Okoyo believes it is important to train church workers as well as instruct the laity.



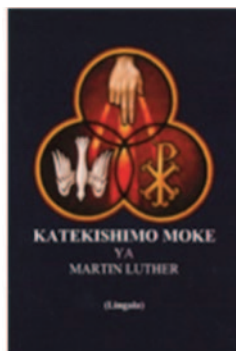
Bishop John Kispan and secretary Stanley Chepkwony of the Rift Valley Diocese (ELCK) receive the donated Bibles.

Bishop John Kispan and secretary Stanley Chepkwony from the Rift Valley Diocese greatly appreciated receiving Bibles with the Catechism and the Augsburg Confession. Their Diocese is spread over a large geographical area and is largely made up of nomadic tribes. Visits to teach at some congregations involve long car journeys and treks to reach remote mountain communities.

Some Bibles were donated to the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Ministerium (ELCM), a confessional Lutheran

Church in central Kenya. The ELCM consists of 26 congregations, and 3 tribal languages. The Bibles aid pastors and evangelists, who often travel on foot and have limited carry capacity, in their mission to train church workers and educate lay members.

In September 2021, the LHF reached out again to request funds for the publication and distribution of Luther's Small Catechism in the Lingala language, for which the translation work had already been completed. Lingala is one of the official languages of the Democratic Republic of Congo and of the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville). In these countries, multiple confessional Lutheran Churches thrive, comprising tens of thousands of Christians eagerly seeking Catechisms in their native language for spiritual instruction. The Catechisms also play a vital role in the training of future pastors. The BOM donated £1200 for an edition of 9000 copies, and the Lingala-language catechism is now in print and available for use.



Ghana

In August 2022, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana (ELCG), Rev. John Donkoh, sent a request for funds to the BOM. The ELCG had plans to plant new churches in the Sunyani district of Ghana, where Rev. Emmanuel Tito, a former Westfield house student, had been called to be a missionary. The list of requirements had many items and exceeded the funds of the Board of Overseas Missions, but the most pressing need was for a motorbike to help visit congregations. The BOM decided to reach out to the congregations of the



Pastor Emmanuel Tito and his family

ELCE to help raise sufficient funds to purchase the motorbike. Fundraising began in May 2023 and within a matter of weeks the target of £1,400 was not only achieved but far exceeded, with a total of £4,538 raised!

We were able to send the money in June and the BOM received joyful news from Ghana that the motorbike, or perhaps more appropriately and practically, the tuk-tuk, had been purchased. Now the Gospel can reach the people of the Sunyani region.

It was agreed by the BOM that all the remaining funds raised for the ELCG should also be donated to support the



Above: Rev. Tito and Rev. Donkoh with members of the ELCG standing on the land they hope to purchase for the church; Below: the motorbike purchased for the ELCG.
growing church in the Sunyani district.

The ELCG has found a plot of land which they hope to purchase for church gatherings. In the future, and as funds allow, the land may be built on and could accommodate a church building and headquarters. The Board for Overseas Mission decided to allocate the remaining money towards securing the land and also fundraise across the ELCE in the hope of raising at least half of the required £8000 to purchase the land. The ELCG in the meantime would appeal to other church bodies to fund the remaining money required.

As of the beginning of January the target of £4000 had been met with donations continuing to come in from across the ELCE.

Thank you to all the individuals, congregations and missions for the generous contributions and prayers for the Ghana project.

The BOM would like to continue fundraising for the full amount needed to purchase the land in Ghana as we believe this is the best way to see the project through to completion, and so we would encourage congregations to continue donating where possible.



Mozambique

Over the past few years the ELCE has provided financial support to Mozambique in a couple of ways.

In March 2019, tropical cyclone Idai hit Mozambique and caused catastrophic damage and a humanitarian crisis. Within the year another natural disaster was unfolding. Crops planted after the cyclone were poor and with the start of the rainy season hope was restored, and more

crops planted. Continuous rain caused widespread floods, however, wiping away many small farms and destroying the crops. This left many Mozambican Lutherans without food or a means to earn their daily bread. Mr. Abel, a member of the Lutheran Church in Mozambique (ICCM) National Board, wrote: “We no longer know how we shall survive this year. That is why we ask the mercy of God and of our brothers and sisters to supply our food needs.”

The BOM felt compelled to send a £400 donation to help buy food and essentials. Messages of thanksgiving were received from Mozambique.

The ICCM is growing tremendously. In 2015 the church had 10 congregations and around 1000 baptised members, but in 2021 there were 120 congregations with 43,974 baptised members, and about 9,000 families. As a result, there is a pressing need to train local pastors and build places of worship. As Portuguese is the official language of Mozambique, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil helps provide theological training for candidates preparing for holy ministry in Mozambique. From time to time, professors and pastors from the



Brazilian Seminary travel to Mozambique to teach intensive courses. In 2021, the Board for Overseas Missions received a request from the ICCM to support visa and travel expenses for a visiting pastor. The amount of £1,200 has been sent via Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to support this project.

To make a donation to help fund the ELCE's overseas mission work, please visit: <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/1543>

I BELIEVE!

February Youth Rally

This year's Winter Youth Rally was held on 16–18 February at Hill End Outdoor Education Centre just outside Oxford. 15 youths aged 11–18 from across the ELCE spent the weekend at the beautiful 70-acre site, gathered round the theme "I Believe in God the Father".

The teacher for the Rally was Rev. George Samiec, who guided us through the first article of the Apostles' Creed. The emphasis was constantly on Jesus, and how faith in Him gives us eyes to see the world and its creation rightly. There was also plenty of discussion about how today's questions about the state of the earth are influenced by the Christian faith.

There was also plenty of time for indoor and outdoor games, team building exercises, delicious food and socialising – not forgetting a faulty gas alarm "entertaining" us on Friday night, and an inspirational film actually entertaining us on Saturday night.

The Rally concluded as we joined the congregation at Oxford Mission for a packed-out Divine Service, followed by a small feast prepared by the congregation.

We at the Board for Youth are profoundly grateful to all the congregations who continue to support our work financially, enabling us to offer weekends like these at a very affordable rate.



“I think the Lutheran youth weekend away was really fun. It was a good mix between fun activities and Bible studies to help us understand God more. One thing that I thought was very useful about the teaching was on the Apostle’s Creed. We talked about how the three articles sum up the Holy Trinity. For example, Article 1 is not as long as the others because “I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth”, says all that needs to be said about how great the Father is.”

— Josiah (16), Resurrection Lutheran Church



Photos: Top - George Samiec; Bottom left and bottom right - Tapani Simojoki.

“Youth gatherings are always something I look forward to; and this one was the best yet. So many kids my age were able to join this year, and it made playing games so much more fun (even though it involved getting mercilessly ‘bullied’ during a game of Dobble). Activity time was a blast as well. I especially loved charging through mucky fields wearing fresh clothes along with everyone else – spoiler, no one actually read the ‘to-pack’ list and that’s why we’re in our Sunday best (totally worth it, I might add!). I really hope we get to keep having youth rallies every year, it’s such an amazing experience and I always go away thinking about it for months afterwards.”

— Rachel (17), Oxford Mission



Called to Life, Called to Live

Rev. Jaime Kriger

Pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church, Cambridge

“On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.’ Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, ‘Fear not, Daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’”

John 12:12–15

READING THIS FAMILIAR HOLY WEEK passage, of Jesus riding a donkey and bringing Good Tidings, reminded me of an article published by The Guardian some 25 years ago. The text is a bit draconian, but I think it offers a quick-witted critique of our times. It begins by speaking of the tribal wisdom of the Dakota Indians, which says that “when you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount”. However, in many modern enterprises of all sorts a whole range of more sophisticated strategies are often employed, so that when you discover that you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to:

1. Buy a stronger whip.
2. Change riders.
3. Threaten the horse with termination.
4. Appoint a committee to study the horse.
5. Arrange to visit other institutions to see how others ride dead horses.

6. Lower the standards so that dead horses can be included.

7. Reclassify the dead horse as living impaired.

8. Hire outside managers to ride the dead horse.

9. Harness several dead horses together to increase the speed.

10. Provide additional funding and training to increase the dead horse’s performance.

11. Do a productivity study to see if lighter riders would improve the dead horse’s performance.

12. Declare that as the dead horse does not have to be fed. It is less costly and contributes substantially more to the bottom line of the economy.

13. Rewrite the expected performance requirements for all horses.

14. And last, but not least, promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.

We will each read this critique differently depending on our setting, or we might not see any associations at all – which is fine, so long as your mindset is that of a recruit in the life-and-death busy-ness of God's Kingdom.

Christians are people who have been reassigned from their former selves to the highest station of life (Ephesians 4). They are each allocated somewhere in the world, but they are no longer of it and – like Paul in Romans 6:11 – they must consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, and here is why:

1. He broke the whip of our oppressor (Isaiah 9:4) and replaced it with a yoke that is light and easy ...
2. ... and this means that we are no longer being ridden into the ground by our taskmaster, but growing up in every way into Christ who is our Head (Ephesians 4:15).
3. He endured termination on the cross for us but rose again; and God will bring with him those who live by and die in faith (1 Thessalonians 4:14).
4. We do not organise committees to study death. We are not naïve. We all possess first-hand experience of the dying notions of this world, but we congregate to study the life-breathing Word of God; particularly the Word made flesh who gives us to know what His resurrection means to us: that He is our life and salvation.
5. So we are, by way of our new nature in Christ, hesitant about notions that

are foreign to God's kingdom. But we remain eager to take God's kingdom into all the nations on our doorstep.

6. We do not dilute our preaching or lower the standard of our teaching, but we become – as per the example of our Lord – servants with him of all those who are being lifted up from death to life by His Word and Sacrament ...

7. ... and these are not living impaired because they have the fulness of life in Christ to not conform to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds to discern what is the will of God and what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2).

8. As for outside managers, our Lord tells us to be wary of the hired hand because they are not shepherds and care nothing for the sheep (John 10:12–13).

9. Good Shepherds don't just harness dead (in their trespasses) people together: they clothe them with the life of Christ, proclaiming the truth that sets them free to walk the way of salvation.

10. We allocate funds not to increase the performance of our mortal flesh but, instead, the grip of our faith on Christ: by studying the Scriptures which are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16).

11. No rider, however light, will be as strong as Him who carried our sins

on His shoulders and met their cost on the cross.

12. Thus, it is counterproductive to look for lower overheads when it comes to the proclamation of the Gospel, for through it we receive the greatest of all treasures and with it the privilege of sponsoring its spread ...

13. ... and there is no rewriting it in expectation of obtaining a better performance from our mortal flesh. Instead, we go back to the basics that we are the elect church of God placed here ...

14. ... not to heed the undermining claims this dying world often makes that we are outdated, but Him who claimed us as His own, abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10).

So, let us not give the world cause to treat us condescendingly, or worse, promote its fruitless works. Instead, let us serve one another in love knowing that for as long as our Master keeps us here, we will have to work with the world but not for it and that will always cause some tensions.

How do we navigate these tensions? By the constant renewal of our minds that by testing we may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2) and knowing that we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:11) to this dying world.

So, let's weather death until we enter eternal life, "for to us to live is Christ, and to die in Him is gain". Every day He grants us here on earth is an opportunity for fruitful labour, and for ing proclaim the day of God's rest in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray: Gracious God, our heavenly Father, Your mercy attends us all our days. So teach us to number them that we may get a heart of wisdom. Be our strength and support amid the wearisome changes of this world and, at life's end, grant us Your promised rest and the full joys of Your salvation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



A FEW OF MY FAVOURITE HYMNS

To mark the 500th anniversary of Lutheran hymnals, we asked some ELCE members to write briefly about their favourite hymns.



TOO MANY TO NAME ONE!

Dorothea Sutherland (Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Coventry)

100 words for my favourite hymn? 100 hymns would be easier! Specific hymn memories come to mind. As young children we sang 'So nimm denn meine Hände' (Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me, LSB 722) at funerals in the church I was confirmed in. I can still hear our clear voices strong in that fresh faith, knowing God holds my hand from now till the end. We sang it again at our wedding – God leading us into this new stretch of life's way.

I remember being uplifted by singing 'Amazing Grace' (LSB 744) on the morning of my mother's funeral, knowing she and we are saved and looking forward to an eternity of singing God's praise with her again one day. And I choke up at the start of 'Great is Thy Faithfulness' (LSB 809) every time, humbly recognising again how much we have to be grateful for.

What a gift our hymnal is. So many comforting hugs from our heavenly Father and so much more!

THY STRONG WORD

George Samiec (ELCE Chairman)



When the Lutheran Church Australia produced a Hymnal Supplement in the 1980s, I discovered 'Thy Strong Word' (LSB 578) by Martin Franzmann (1907–1976). It was also included in the ELCE's 758+ Supplement. I have only ever sung it to the tune 'Ebenezer' by Thomas Williams (1869–1944) and have always loved singing this hymn. Tune and words are beautifully crafted together to produce a theological journey where all of creation needs God's 'strong word'. In verse 4 we are taken to the Word made flesh on the cross. Each verse praises God culminating in the wonderful Trinitarian crescendo in verse 6! For me, the hymn is a wonderful summary of theology and pastoral practice. It is one that I would like sung at my funeral because 'Thy Strong Word' means that death is not the end!



O JESUS, I HAVE PROMISED (Hymnal Supplement 63)
Barbie Millward (St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
Borehamwood)

This hymn always speaks to me! The first line never fails to remind me of that special day in my life when I was confirmed (together with 20 others) at Zion Lutheran Church Walla Walla (New South Wales), followed by the next line containing the prayer "Be Thou for ever near me". The hymn so succinctly describes the difficulties one has as a Christian to remain faithful to Him when the various challenges of life cause us to doubt. However, as we are reminded in verse 4, Jesus has promised to His followers

"That where Thou art in glory
There shall Thy servant be".

That is my prayer that despite my human failings our Lord will give His strength to keep me faithful to Him all my life.

WHEN PEACE LIKE A RIVER (LSB 763)

William Scott (St. Columba Lutheran Church, East Kilbride)

The story of this hymn begins in 1873, when American lawyer and businessman Horatio G. Spafford decided to take a holiday in Europe with his wife Anna and four daughters. At the last moment he was detained by business matters, and Anna and her four daughters sailed from New York on the French steamship *Ville du Havre*. The ship collided with the *Loch Earn*, a British sailing ship, and sank in a few minutes. Anna was rescued but, despite the efforts of the sailors, all four daughters were lost.

On reaching the port of Cardiff, Anna sent her husband the famous telegram beginning with the words "Saved Alone". Horatio set out for Europe to join his wife, and at the location where his daughters were lost at sea he was inspired to write the words of this famous hymn. The music was composed by Philip P. Bliss, who wrote many other hymns. Not long after writing the music for "When Peace Like a River," Philip Bliss and his wife were killed in a railway accident.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Bible Trial Continues in Finland

The prosecution of Finnish Member of Parliament, Dr. Päivi Räsänen, and Bishop Juhana Pohjola of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Diocese of Finland (ELMDF) is not yet at an end. Even though charges were dismissed both in the District Court and the Court of Appeals, on January 12, the prosecution announced that it would appeal the decision exonerating the pair to Finland's Supreme Court.

The two were charged in 2021 with hate speech for their articulation of historic Christian teaching on human sexuality. A full account of the legal battle until now is given in the December 2023 issue of *The British Lutheran*.

The decision to prosecute the pair has drawn widespread concern internationally over the state of freedom of religion and freedom of speech in Finland.

Now Bishop Pohjola and Dr. Räsänen must wait to hear whether the Supreme Court will accept the case. In the meantime, the International Lutheran Council (ILC) is calling for continued prayer for the Finnish politician and bishop. "I encourage Christians around the world to continue to remember Bishop Pohjola and Dr. Räsänen in prayer," said Rev. Dr. Klaus Detlev Schulz, General Secretary of the ILC. "They have already endured years of fear and uncertainty as a result of this unjust prosecution. May God give them courage to continue their faithful witness to Christ and His Word, and may He give them comfort in the midst of ongoing persecution."



*Left: Juhana Pohjola and Päivi Räsänen at the Court of Appeals.
Photo: ELMDF*

Ancient Pool of Siloam, where Jesus healed a blind man, uncovered by archaeologists in Jerusalem



Photo: City of David Foundation

Archaeologists in Jerusalem said that an ancient site where Jesus healed a blind man have been uncovered, revealing a place not seen for 2,000 years.

First noted in 2 Kings 20:20, the Pool of Siloam and its steps feature in the account of Jesus healing the man who was born without sight “that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:3).

While a small section of the Pool of Siloam has been accessible for a number of years, the new dig reveals the vast majority of the large pool that dates back to the eighth century BC.

The steps at the pool, located in the City of David have been

under excavation since December. According to online reports, significant progress has been made in unearthing the landmark.

The Pool of Siloam was at one point as large as 1.25 acres and was a significant site in the ancient city. Jesus’ healing of the blind man culminated in his command that the man “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (John 9:7).

The site was originally built under King Hezekiah as part of Jerusalem’s water system. It served as a reservoir for the Gihon Spring from which water was diverted and stored in underground tunnels.

A chance discovery revealed the pool in 2004, when infrastructure work carried out by a water company uncovered some of the pool’s steps. The Israel Antiquities Authority launched a survey, which led to the northern perimeter, as well as a small section of the eastern perimeter, of the Pool being uncovered.

Map of ELCE Congregations



Congregation	Address	Service Time
Ascension Lutheran Church	Brandon Methodist Church, London Road, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 0EL	9 am, <i>except 5 pm on the 1st Sunday of the month</i>
Brighton Lutheran Mission	Holland Road Baptist Church, 65–71 Holland Road, Hove, BN3 1JN	3.30 pm on the 1 st Sunday of month
Bristol Lutheran Mission	Contact St. Peter's Lutheran Church for details	
Cheltenham Lutheran Mission	Contact Luther-Tyndale Memorial Church for details	
Christ Lutheran Church	227 Poverest Road, Orpington, BR5 1RD	10.30 am
Edinburgh Lutheran Mission	Contact Christ Lutheran Church for details	
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church	49 Eastern Green Road, Coventry, CV5 7LG	4 pm on the 2 nd & 4 th Sunday of the month
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church	53 Antill Road, London, N15 4AR	11 am
Ipswich Lutheran Mission	St. Luke's Church, 78 Cliff Lane, Ipswich, IP3 0PJ	6 pm on the 3 rd Sunday of the month
Luther-Tyndale Memorial Church	9 Leighton Crescent, Kentish Town	10 am
Our Saviour Lutheran Church	10th Fareham Scouts, 20B Highlands Road, Fareham, PO16 7XN	10.30 am
Oxford Lutheran Mission	Marston United Reformed Church, 352 Marston Road, Marston, Oxford, OX3 0JB	4.30 pm on the 2 nd , 3 rd & 4 th Sunday of the month
Rainham Lutheran Mission	Contact Christ Lutheran Church for details	
Redeemer Lutheran Church	22 Tawneys Road, Harlow, CM18 6QS	11 am
Resurrection Lutheran Church	25 Westfield Lane, Cambridge, CB4 3QS	11 am
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	Whitby Road, Ruislip, HA4 9DY	11.30 am
St. Columba Lutheran Church	151 Westwood Hill, East Kilbride, G75 8QA	11 am
St. David Lutheran Church	St. Fagans Road, Fairwater, Cardiff, CF5 3EU	11 am <i>except 6 pm on the last Sunday of the month</i>
St. Paul's Lutheran Church	St. Paul's Close, Cranes Way, Borehamwood, WD6 2DB	9.30 am
St. Peter's Lutheran Church	21 Larkham Lane, Plympton, Plymouth, PL7 4PG	11 am
St. Timothy's Lutheran Mission	Queen Alexandra Road, Sunderland, SR2 9AA	11 am on the 1 st & 3 rd Saturday of the month

A Hymn to God the Father

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

John Donne

The speaker of this poem is intensely troubled by the knowledge of his own sinfulness – not just that he has sinned, but that he knows he will continue to do so. He implores God for forgiveness, knowing that it is promised to him, but nonetheless unable to be fully comforted, for he will always 'have more'. In the final stanza, he acknowledges his fear of damnation, that he might 'perish on the shore'. But the poem does not end in fear. Instead, the speaker holds God to his promise that 'at my death thy Son / Shall shine as he shines now'. Redemption does not begin at our death, but rather it has already begun. Jesus has already triumphed over death, and therefore we can say with the poet: 'I fear no more'. In this time of Lent, we penitently remember our sinfulness, but we should never forget that the Son shines on us without ceasing: not just at Easter – not just after our death – but always.

John Donne (c.1571–1621) was a poet and priest, and the originator of the phrases 'No man is an island', and 'Ask not for whom the bell tolls: it tolls for thee.' Throughout the poem, he puns on his name and that of his wife, Anne More. In 1621, he became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, a position which he held until his death in 1631.

— Hanna Simojoki

