



LAKE OCONEE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Lake Oconee Lutheran Church

*God writes His Word on our Lives,
Building us into a Family engaged in Spirit-filled Service.*

Our Church Newsletter

November 2023

Pastor Steven Hayden
revshayden@gmail.com

Secretary Sonya Plunkett
officelolc@gmail.com

Instrumentalist Dr. Lev Rybanin
Choir Director Dr. Youngmi Kim

Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.
1st, 3rd, & 5th Sundays Holy Communion
2nd & 4th Sundays Morning Worship
Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Children's Sunday School 10am


1089 Lake Oconee Parkway
Eatonton, Georgia 31024
Church Office 706-485-4600

Visit our web site: www.lakeoconeelutheran.org

Dear Friends in Christ,

On October 31, 1517, a German pastor named Martin Luther started the Reformation when he nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany. That happened more than five hundred years ago. We are still remembering and celebrating the Reformation today because it teaches us the central truth of Christianity: we are not saved because we are good people who do good things. We are not saved because we give money to the Church. We are not saved because of anything we do at all. No, not at all.

The central truth of Christianity is this: we are saved because of God's grace, that is, the undeserved love God has for sinners like us. We are saved because of what Jesus has done for us. That's the good news we hear in Romans 3:28, "**We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.**" That means that our celebration today isn't about the hammer and nail that Martin Luther used five hundred years ago. Our celebration today is really about the hammer and nails that were used on Jesus two



thousand years ago. That hammer put nails through Jesus' hands and feet to crucify Him on the cross.

That hammer and another nail put a sign on the cross, above Jesus' head. That sign wasn't the Ninety-Five Theses. The sign said, "**Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.**" The true King overall, Jesus Christ, came to die for us sinners. Jesus came as the Baby in Bethlehem so that He could grow up and sacrifice His sinless life so that we could be forgiven our sins. Jesus didn't do that because we were good enough and had earned it; He did it because He loves us. Jesus' gracious love for you and for me and for this whole world full of sinners is what took Him to the cross. By His death on the cross, our salvation is won. By His resurrection on that first Easter, we know that we too will be raised from the dead. This is good news!

This is the good news of our salvation. And we know that this good news is true for us because Jesus has promised it to us in His Word and in Holy Baptism. We are saved by grace because Jesus loves us, and we receive our salvation through faith, trusting what Jesus has told us is true. This good news is the heart of the Reformation. This good news is the heart of the Church still today.

This good news of Jesus Christ is why we're celebrating today and forever!

Pastor Steve

We have all read the stories and heard the lessons in church, but what if we could stand in those very spots today? In October 2024 Pastor and Linda will be leading a tour to "**Walk in the Footsteps of Paul**". Experience with them the Bible coming to life as we follow in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul and walk through the Bible lands ourselves. This 10 day tour will take us to many of the places Paul visited and which we have heard about: Thessaloniki (Thessalonians), Philippi (Philippians), Ephesus (Ephesians), Corinth (Corinthians), Crete (where Paul left Titus to serve as pastor), and Athens. We will also visit the island of Patmos where the Apostle John experienced the Revelation and more. In the midst of the trip we will board a ship for a three day Mediterranean cruise.

Talk to Pastor Steve for an itinerary, pricing, more information or if you have any questions.

LOLC offers Bible Study



Sunday Morning Bible class

Exodus can seem like a complex book,-a book of events and accounts that are not always easy to understand and to relate to our life today. However, referring to the Old Testament, Jesus said, "The Scriptures ... testify about Me" (John 5:39). The effort to understand the exodus-the going out of God's people from Egypt-and the encounter with God at Sinai gives us a deeper insight into God, His dealings with His people, and most of all His gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. The importance of Exodus does not lie in its size or place but in its message. Join us on **Sunday mornings at 9am**, either in person in the church or livestreamed on Facebook for [Exodus](#).

Mid Week Bible Class

The Dictionary defines a hero as:

1. a person noted for courageous acts or (2) a person with nobility of character who is regarded as a role model or ideal: as in-*He became a local hero when he saved the drowning child or My older sister is my hero.*

So, when we talk about the Heroes of the Faith, we are highlighting men and women in the Bible who overcame extraordinary difficulties and show extraordinary faith.

However, often to our surprise, their stories show that God doesn't make heroes. God chooses ordinary people, quiet people, perhaps even unknown people—people like you—to do His extraordinary work. These people are not held up as towers of strength and ability. Rather, we see, God is the true hero of each Bible story! These lessons will show how God forgave, sustained, and empowered that person to be able to serve Him, even as He promises to do with you and me today. **Join us each Wednesday morning as we study the [Quiet Heroes of the Faith](#) at 10:30 am on Zoom.**

Women's Bible class

"The Women's Bible Study resumed their focus of Acts, The Power of the Holy Spirit. We will start with lesson 6 of the study which will continue to help us kindle a burning desire for a passion-filled life fueled by the heart of God. Please join us whenever the spirit moves you. We would love to have you!" We meet on **Tuesdays, at 10:00 am** in the choir room

Lake Oconee Lutheran Church

Council Meeting

October 8th, 2023

The meeting was called to order by President Tom Mathson followed by a prayer by Pastor Hayden.

Don was not in attendance.

The minutes from the September 10th council meeting were approved.

Council Committee Reports:

VP/Personnel: Mike Joost- no report

Treasurer: Kathie Kueven- The September reports for the 4 accounts were distributed and discussed. LOLC has taken in \$170K more YTD then spent due to the receiving of the DOT funds. \$2400 per month is being transferred per month from the operating fund to the DOT Fund. The Bread of Life balance is \$54K, and the Community Center balance is \$8K.

Financial Secretary: Walter Krause- The Financial report was distributed by Pastor Hayden. It was noted that we are behind in donations YTD by \$7K, it was due to 2023 donations given in 2022 were credited in 2022. A member donated \$3500 for the new water fountains.

Congregational Secretary: Larry Davis- no report


Church Properties: Barney Ross – Barney is meeting with landscaping companies to provide estimates and plans for updating our original landscaping. This is in process. It was suggested to get landscape plans to review. It was also discussed that eventually that we may want a driveway leading from Hwy 44 through the Community Center parking lot to the church. He has also met with Piedmont Water to discuss the Septic tank and well at the Community Center. These will be abandoned when the Community Center goes to Piedmont water and sewer for the road expansion.

Lay Ministry: Don Menke- no report

Christian Education: Bob Elkins- There are 3 children attending Sunday School.

Christian Service/Outreach: Margaret Pedersen- National Collection Week for Operation Christmas Child is November 13-20. The Processing Center trip is scheduled for December 11. The Bread of Life first distribution will be on October 12th. Beth has done a great job at getting this rolling. The process for the Bread of Life program was described.

Pastor's Report: Steve Hayden- Pastor Hayden thanked the council for the surprise recognition of the Pastor and Linda's 5th Anniversary at LOLC. It was greatly



appreciated. The Florida/Georgia District conference was held the last week of September in Florida, and attended by Pastor, Linda and 6 members. The conference focused on Outreach, “Loving them in”.

The Milledgeville committee will meet following Pastor Hayden’s vacation which is from October 10-17 for his daughter’s wedding.

A motion was made by Mike and seconded by Margaret, **“I move that we grant permission to Pastor Hayden to have a door offering on October 29th and November 5th to support our scholarship recipient for the 2024-2025 school year through the Lake Oconee Youth Alliance.”** The motion passed.

Old Business:

1. **Parking lot sealing and striping-** Is complete and looks great.
2. **Sewer/Water project for Community Center-**Discussed in committee report.
3. **Election of officers/all positions have nominees.**

A. President: Mike Joost

B. Vice President: Pam Kunz

C. Treasurer: Kathie Kueven (incumbent)

D. Financial Secretary: Walter Krause (incumbent)

E. Congregation Secretary: Carol Campbell

F. Lay Ministry- Selected by the Board of Elders

Not up for election this year:

Church Properties: Barney Ross

Christian Education: Bob Elkins

Christian Service/Outreach: Margaret Pedersen


A motion was made by Walter and seconded by Margaret, **“I move that we accept the slate of candidates as presented.** The motion passed.

4. **Christmas Eve/Christmas Day Services-** Sunday Christmas Eve will have a 10:30 AM and a 7 PM service. There will be no Bible Study or Fellowship snacks. Christmas Day will have a 10 AM service.

New Business:

1. **Landscaping Upgrade-** Discussed in Committee report.

2. **2024 Budget Approval-** The 2024 budget was presented by Kathie. After questions and discussion:
-



A motion was made by Walter and seconded by Margaret, **“I move that we accept the 2024 budget as presented.”** The motion passed.

3. Signature cards for new CD’s- It was discussed that Bob Elkins is still on the signature card for LOLC at BankSouth. We need to remove Bob Elkins from the BankSouth account and add a new signature. We also need to purchase a new \$150K CD at a different institution to stay under FDIC limits.

A motion was made by Margaret and seconded by Walter, **“I move that we remove Bob Elkins from our signature authority at BankSouth.”** The motion passed.

A motion was made by Margaret and seconded by Tom, **“I move that we add Mike Joost to our signature authority at BankSouth”** The motion passed.

A motion was made by Kathie Kueven and seconded by Margaret Pedersen: **“I move that we remove \$150K from the BankSouth checking account and open a CD for \$150K at the Exchange Bank. Kathie Kueven and Mike Joost will have signature authority with this bank.”** The motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord’s Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Larry Davis

Congregational Secretary

LAKE OCONEE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Treasurer's Report - September 30, 2023

	<u>Monthly Budget</u>	<u>Period Activity</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Y-T-D Budget</u>	<u>Y-T-D Activity</u>	<u>Difference</u>	
INCOME							Restricted Fund Balances
General Fund	30,000	15,738	14,262	270,600	241,562	29,038	Organ \$478
Debt Reduction	3,685	985	2,700	33,161	13,700	19,461	A/P \$2,169
Memorial Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0	Memorials \$5,616
Sunday School	0	0	0	0	0	0	OCC Fund \$3,223
Special Fund Income	<u>490</u>	<u>10,591</u>	<u>-10,101</u>	<u>4,412</u>	<u>343,747</u>	<u>-339,335</u>	Little FP \$3,995
TOTAL OFFERINGS	\$34,175	\$27,314	\$6,861	\$308,173	\$599,009	-\$290,836	M-of-M \$387
							M'ville Min. \$5,000
							DOT Funds <u>\$222,857</u>
							TOTAL \$243,725
							A/P: \$2,169
							District \$0
							P/R \$2,169
EXPENSES							Mortgage balanc \$0
Pastor Expense	14,787	16,313	-1,526	133,084	134,004	-920	
Worship Expense	2,640	579	2,061	23,760	19,361	4,399	
Property Expense	6,305	3,807	2,498	56,595	44,133	12,462	
Bus. & Admin. Expense	2,600	1,552	1,048	23,396	20,645	2,751	BANK BALANCES:
Education Expense	158	66	92	1,425	840	585	Bank South \$236,109
Evangelism/Outreach Exp.	767	193	574	6,900	2,805	4,095	BS CD \$102,110.37
Stewardship Expense	0	0	0	350	0	350	Anderson \$125,305.34
Fellowship Expense	217	278	-61	1,950	901	1,049	Comm. Ctr. \$7,733.62
Mission Expense (District)	8,250	5,819	2,431	24,750	23,902	848	Bread of Life \$53,934.50
DCE Expenses	0	0	0	0	0	0	Mortensen <u>\$100,287.97</u>
Other Expenses	<u>4,147</u>	<u>20,672</u>	<u>-16,525</u>	<u>37,325</u>	<u>181,998</u>	<u>-144,673</u>	TOTAL \$625,480.60
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$39,871	\$49,279	-\$9,408	\$309,535	\$428,589	-\$119,054	
TOTAL INCOME LESS EXPENSES	-\$5,696	-21,965	\$16,269	-\$1,362	\$170,420	-\$171,782	

Notes: \$9000 expense for parking lot included in other expenses rather than repairs & mtce.
 \$2,220 (normal mgt. pay.) transferred to DOT funds
 General fund income includes \$3720.38 mortgage refund; \$466.98 Wells Fargo refund
 \$3,501 for new water fountains was paid for by a donation

LOLC - COMMUNITY CENTER

Treasurer's Report - Sept. 30, 22023

	<u>Monthly Budget</u>	<u>Period Activity</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Y-T-D Budget</u>	<u>Y-T-D Activity</u>	<u>Difference</u>
INCOME						
Rental Income	1,000.00	1,941.00	-941.00	9,000.00	11,831.12	-2,831.12
Donations	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Income	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL INCOME	1,000.00	1,941.00	-941.00	9,000.00	11,831.12	-2,831.12
EXPENSES						
Rental Refunds	0.00	350.00	-350.00	0.00	2,117.42	-2,117.42
Utilities	250.00	245.00	5.00	2,250.00	2,118.00	132.00
Pest Control	50.00	180.00	-130.00	450.00	180.00	270.00
Yard Maintenance	150.00	0.00	150.00	1,350.00	0.00	1,350.00
Janitorial	360.00	450.00	-90.00	3,240.00	3,430.00	-190.00
Supplies	29.16	0.00	29.16	262.51	172.13	90.38
Repair & Mtce.	125.00	0.00	125.00	1,125.00	15,600.48	-14,475.48
Equipment	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Expenses	<u>35.83</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>35.83</u>	<u>322.51</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>222.51</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	999.99	1,225.00	-225.01	9,000.02	23,718.03	-14,718.01
TOTAL INCOME LESS EXPENSES	0.01	716.00	-715.99	-0.02	-11,886.91	11,886.89
Bank Balance	\$7,733.62					
Accounts Payable	\$0.00					

TREASURER'S REPORT - LOLC ANDERSON FUND

August 2023

	<u>Period Activity</u>	<u>Period Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Year-to-Date Activity</u>	<u>Year-to-Date Budget</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Income						
Interest Income	<u>66.48</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>66.48</u>	<u>520.17</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>520.17</u>
Total Income:	\$66.48	\$0.00	\$66.48	\$520.17	\$0.00	\$520.17
Expenses						
DCE Salary	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DCE Rent & Utilities	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
DCE Internet	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Evangelism Supplies	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Expenses	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Total Expenses:	\$0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00
Total Income Less Expenses:	66.48	0.00	\$66.48	520.17	0.00	\$520.17

Bank Balance: \$125,305.34

BREAD OF LIFE

Treasurer's Report - September 30, 2023

	<u>Period Activity</u>	<u>Year to Date Activity</u>
INCOME		
Donations	\$6,400.73	\$56,721.43
Other Income	<u>\$320.70</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>
TOTAL INCOME	\$6,721.43	\$56,721.43
EXPENSES		
Groceries	\$213.56	\$213.56
Administrative Expenses	\$57.00	\$68.44
Office Equipment		\$1,057.30
Office Supplies	\$65.22	\$65.22
Operating Supplies		407.48
Telephone Expenses		\$246.27
Bank Service Charges		\$5.00
Furniture & Fixtures		
Other Equipment	\$810.87	\$810.87
Other Expenses		\$320.27
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,146.65	\$2,786.93
INCOME LESS EXPENSES	\$5,574.78	\$53,934.50

Note: Other income is reimbursement from Beth for overpayment of expenses by her



Let's welcome new members here at LOLC

Janice Sollenberger
Roy & Candy McAllister
Bruce Punger
Ralph & Audrey Kunz
Marja Yazbak
David & Cynthia Plummer
Stephen & Gayle Bradford
Alison Vancott-Goodwin

Here's a little about our new members

Marja Yazbak and her husband Wally moved to the Reynolds area a year ago from Atlanta. She continued to work in the Information Technology until she retired this year. They have two sons living in other areas. Marja has two cats. She is currently looking forward to relaxing and enjoying retirement in the lake area. She enjoys swimming and doing laps at the indoor pool at Reynolds Lake Club. She also enjoys having the time to read. Marja has been a lifelong member of the Lutheran church. She was born in Finland but moved to the states many years ago. The members of LOLC welcome Marja to our church

Operation Christmas Child – 2023

This year our Operation Christmas Child (OCC) Ministry will look a little different. We will have shoeboxes with instructions for you to **pack your own boxes** available after Easter. This way you can personalize your shoeboxes and encourage family and friends to participate with you. Include your neighbors, pickleball or tennis team, craft group, or co-workers. Pack a box with your grandchildren. Celebrate your birthday, anniversary, or other special event by packing a shoebox with your family or friends. Feel free to pack multiple boxes. Remember, school supplies go on sale in July! Drop off your filled shoebox gifts throughout the year at the church before **November 10**.

Another option that you may find more convenient is to **build a shoebox online**. Shoebox gifts built online go to the ends of the earth to children in some of the hardest-to-reach places. Online boxes are carefully prepared, abiding by strict customs regulations to safeguard partners who will deliver the gifts, as well as the boys and girls who receive them. The suggested donation is \$25 per shoebox. The link and instructions are available at:

(Ctrl+ click to follow the link)

<https://build-a-shoebox.samaritanspurse.org/view/fc231373-e88f-419b-94d9-5b8845433e26>

You can also scan this QR code below with your cell phone camera:



Select **“BUILD A SHOEBBOX ONLINE NOW”** and follow instructions. By using this link, we will be able to track our church’s progress toward our shoebox goal.

Our “faith goal” this year is **200 boxes**. Let us **pray and rejoice** as God works through us to reach children with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Worship Update -- Live streaming

Remember, we are now live streaming our Sunday Bible Class and Worship. This means both services will be broadcast live as they happen on Sunday mornings at 9:00 am and 10:30 am on Facebook. Join us as we all come together in worship. If you are unable to be online while they are live, do not worry. The recorded services will remain available for you to watch later as well. You may find it on the @lakeoconeelutheranchurch page on Facebook. God's blessings to each of you!

Mites

The Widow's mite of Mark 12: 41-44 is the inspiration for the LWML mite boxes.



The Ladies of the Church organize mites' collections on a continuous basis. The third Sunday of each month is the official Mites Sunday after which the monies gathered go to the Lutheran Women's Missionary League to support various ministries around the world.

Detailed information is available at www.lwml.org and on Facebook. The third Sunday of the month is designated Mite Sunday, but donations are always welcome.

We express heartfelt thanks for your charitable generosity.

Coffee & Fellowship



The coffee fellowship that follows the Sunday church service gives us an opportunity to welcome visitors, meet new members and visit with each other. We have missed it, But now it has returned. You may still leave after church if you do not feel comfortable yet with the in-person gathering. We want you to feel free to make the best decisions for your own care. We do want to continue to enjoy the coffee fellowship, so we are making a few temporary adjustments for the time being.

*We are asking you to give each other lots of room and keep in mind the need for social distancing. We can still talk with one another, just standing further apart.

*We are also need volunteers signing up for snacks and serving. Look for the signup sheet in the narthex on the table if you'd like to volunteer. We are thankful for one small step back into the familiar friendliness of our church family.

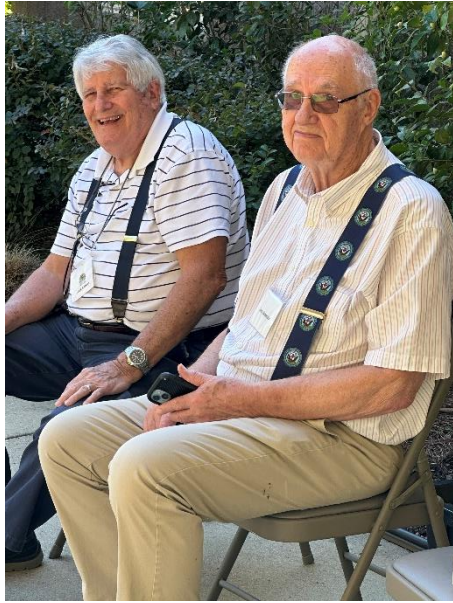
Choir Notes



Choir Meets Sunday mornings @9 am

We've been busy here at LOLC





Bread of Life Ministry food distribution

Opportunities to Serve

Little Free Pantry

Lake Oconee Lutheran has an opportunity to serve our community on a daily basis. We now have our own Little Free Pantry where members of the community can come and take groceries at any time that they need and leave anything that they do not need. Our mission is to stock up on items so that we can have a supply of Groceries to share!

Items to purchase

Please make sure they are not expired and in good condition

- pasta products/rice/Ramen noodles
- peanut butter/jelly
- canned vegetables/fruit
- pasta sauce
- canned meat

Please NO glass containers

Volunteers

Altar Care there is a signup sheet in the narthex on the front table.

Sunday service camera operator. we will provide training on how to manage it. signup sheets are in the narthex on the front table, or you can call/email the church office.

Ushers' signup sheets are in the narthex on the front table, or you can call/email the church office

Coffee Fellowship signup sheets are in the narthex on the front table.

Little Free Pantry signup sheets are in the narthex on the front table.

Scripture readers You can contact the office for Sonya to put you on the email list

Communion assistants you can contact the office for Sonya to put you on the email list

Sunday School teachers 2 teachers per Sunday to rotate sign ups are on the blue table.

Blood Drive

The next blood drives are scheduled for Nov 16 & Jan 11. If you are interested in volunteering email Pam Kunz at Kunzpd3@outlook.com. To sign up to donate blood go to redcrossblood.org and use code LOLC.

“Whose Land Is It?”

By Rev. Dr. Reed Lessing | The Lutheran Witness

As a parent who survived the toddler years with three children, I still clearly recall the “Toddler Property Laws”: If I like it, it’s mine. If it’s in my hand, it’s mine. If I can take it from you, it’s mine. If I had it a little while ago, it’s mine. It must never appear to be yours in any way; it’s always and forevermore mine!

Over the millennia, numerous rulers, governments, and nations have looked at the land of Israel and said, “Forevermore, mine!”

The land once belonged to the Amorites, as we learn in Genesis 15. Then it was possessed by the Israelites. The Assyrians (2 Kings 17:6), Babylonians (2 Kings 25:22), Persians (2 Chron. 36:23), Greeks (Dan. 11:1–5), and Romans (Luke 3:1) all claimed ownership at times during Old Testament history. And since the end of the New Testament period, the Byzantine, Ottoman, and British empires have looked at this land and said “Mine!”

So whose land is it?

Politically or theologically?

Generally speaking, the question of who owned Palestine was answered politically from 70 A.D., when the Roman army crushed the Jewish rebellion and dismantled Jerusalem, until the 1840s. Whoever had the military might and diplomatic ability owned the land.

In the 1840s, John Nelson Darby, a Plymouth Brethren minister from England, began teaching that the question of Palestine’s ownership needed to be answered theologically.

By introducing the method of biblical interpretation called Premillennial-Dispensationalism, Darby heralded the idea that biblical history is divided into seven “dispensations” or periods of time. The end of the sixth dispensation, he stated, would be triggered by Israel’s return to the land.

Picking up where Darby left off, Cyrus Scofield propagated Premillennial-Dispensationalism in his influential Scofield Reference Bible, first published in 1909. The Scofield Reference Bible is the single most important document espousing the teaching that God permanently gave the land of Palestine to the Jews.


Prior to these teachings of Darby and Scofield, most Christians (including Lutherans) understood the ownership of Palestine to be a political issue, not a theological issue.

All of that has changed. It is estimated that 40 million Christians in the United States now embrace the idea that the present-day state of Israel created by the United Nations in 1948 is by divine decree and is a sign that we live in “the last days.”

The ‘Left Behind’ effect

Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye have taken Scofield’s ideas and disseminated them via their “Left Behind” series of novels. The authors believe the fuse that ignited “the last days” was ethnic Israel’s return to the land of Palestine in 1948. They call this “the super sign of biblical prophecy” because they believe this event will trigger the rapture of the Church, which could occur at any moment.

The rapture will be followed by seven years of suffering and destruction, called the tribulation. After this, Christ will visibly return as Judge and usher in the seventh dispensation, His 1,000-year reign on



earth. During this time, unbelievers will increase in numbers. Christ will return (again) and bring all evil to an end. He will usher in the new heavens and new earth. The key to the unfolding of these events, they believe, is that the land of Palestine forever belongs to the Jews.

What does the Bible say?

The Old Testament declares that the land of Canaan (approximately present-day Israel and Palestine, plus adjoining coastal lands and parts of Lebanon and Syria) belongs to the Lord (cf. Ps. 24:1); He is the one who gave it to Israel (Deut. 6:10–11), and He is the One who can take it away (Lev. 26:33). Land could not be permanently bought or sold (cf. 1 Kings 21:1–16); it could not be given away, let alone stolen or confiscated. The land in the Old Testament was always a means for a greater end, the coming of Jesus Christ in the fullness of time (Gen. 17:1–7; Gal. 3:14, 29; 4:4). To a large extent, however, it was Israel's belief that it—not the Lord—owned the land that led to the Northern Kingdom's exile of 721 B.C. to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom's exile of 587 B.C. to Babylon.

When Jesus speaks about the land in Luke 19:41–44, He makes no reference to it ever being restored to the Jews. Rather, He taught His disciples to look forward — not to a Jewish return to the land — but to the coming of the Son of Man in His glory on the Last Day (Matt. 24:30–31; Luke 21:25–28; Dan. 7:13–14).

Jesus makes only several explicit references to the land in the Gospels. The strongest is in the Beatitudes. In Matt. 5:5, the Savior quotes from Ps. 37:11, where the blessing of the meek is the inheritance of the land. Yet, it is not the land of Israel, but the entire earth that the meek will inherit (cf. Rom. 4:13). And, in light of the strong eschatological dimensions of the Sermon on the Mount, this earth is the “new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

Until the Day of Pentecost, the disciples shared the same nationalistic understanding of the land as the other Jews of the first century (cf. Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6). But after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they began to use Old Testament language concerning the land in new ways. One example comes from Peter, who speaks of our inheritance that, unlike the land of Palestine, “can never perish, spoil, or fade” (1 Peter 1:4).

The book of Hebrews is filled with examples of how the New Testament reinterprets “the land.” Christians have the land, described as the rest into which they have entered through Christ (Heb. 4:1–11). In Heb. 11:13–16, the central Gospel motif is the land. The pilgrimage of faith is set in three scenes: a land from which they set out in faith, the present context of wandering, and the hoped-for homeland that is a “better,” indeed a “heavenly” city.

Shadows or reality?

Premillennial-Dispensationalists believe that Israel's resettlement of the land in 1948 is the key to a correct understanding of the end times. They contend that Old Testament prophecies regarding not only the land, but also such promises as the rebuilding of the Temple and the reinstatement of its sacrifices, must be literally fulfilled.

It is clear from Scripture, however, that these Old Testament promises are to be read in light of the New Testament. The Old Testament revelation of God's acts in the history of Israel consists of shadows, images, forms, and prophecies. The New Testament announces the reality, substance, and final fulfillment of these promises in the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:44). The question, then, is not whether the land-promises of the Old Testament are to be understood literally or

spiritually. Rather, it's a question of whether they should be understood in terms of Old Testament shadows or in terms of New Testament realities.

When the New Testament is allowed to interpret the Old Testament, it follows that the 1948 state of Israel is not a prophetic realization of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in the land of Palestine, its capital in Jerusalem, its constituency, or its ceremonial institutions and practices. The Old Testament needs to be viewed in light of Jesus Christ.

The land-promises that God gave to Abraham were made effective through Christ, Abraham's true Seed (Gal. 3:16). All spiritual benefits are derived from Jesus, and apart from Him there is no participation in the promises made to Abraham (Gal. 3:26–29). These promises are not directed toward any particular ethnic group. The Church — not Jews or the Israelis — is the true Israel of God, and the baptized are the children of Abraham.

When Premillennial-Dispensationalists point to the modern state of Israel as a concrete manifestation of God's presence, they overlook the fact that God has left visible and tangible signs indicating that He is with His people. First John 5:7–8 states: "For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." God testifies to being present with His Church right now by means of the Spirit-inspired and Christ-centered Old and New Testament Scriptures, the water of Baptism, and the true body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.

The assurance of God working in the world is therefore not based on the return of the Jews to their ancestral land, but rather on the sure Word of promise of forgiveness of sins imparted in the means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments.

There is no suggestion that Jesus or the apostles believed the Jewish people still have a divine right to the land, or that the Jewish possession of the land would be an important — let alone central aspect of God's plan for the world. The land was promised to Abraham, taken possession of under Joshua, lost in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, regained by Judah upon Cyrus' decree in 538 B.C., and reinterpreted by Jesus, Paul, and others as a new heaven and new earth.

The hope of the baptized, therefore, is not placed on current events in the Middle East. Rather, we are called to fix our eyes on Jesus as we long and pray for His Second and Final Advent. On that day, He will raise us from the dead and usher us into the new heavens and the new earth. Then Jesus will lovingly gaze upon all the baptized and say, "I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are always and forevermore mine!" (cf. Is. 43:1).

**Editor's Note: This article by Reed Lessing originally appeared in the November 2006 issue of The Lutheran Witness. Please note that Dr. Lessing does not address the political situation in Israel. Rather, he seeks to address the theological issues related to claims about the land of Israel.*

November 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>29</p> <p>9:00 AM Adult Bible School 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal 10:30 AM Worship Service Communion</p>	30	<p>31</p> <p>10 am Women's Bible Class</p>	<p>1</p> <p>10:30 ZOOM Bible Class Happy Birthday Bonnie Neuleib</p>	2	3	<p>4</p> <p>5:00 PM Episcopal Church Service</p>
<p>5</p> <p>9:00 AM Adult Bible School 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal 10:30 AM Worship Service Communion Daylight Savings time ends</p>	<p>6</p> <p>4 pm Election set up</p>	<p>7 Election Day</p> <p>10 am Women's Bible Class Happy Birthday Janie Fritch Phil Johnson Happy Anniversary Greg & Barbara Hardesty</p>	<p>8</p> <p>10:30 ZOOM Bible Class</p>	<p>9</p> <p>11am Bread of Life Distribution</p>	10	<p>11 Veterans Day</p> <p>5:00 PM Episcopal Church Service Happy Birthday Gary Roper</p>
<p>12</p> <p>9:00 AM Adult Bible School 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal 10:30 AM Worship Service Council Meeting Non-communion</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Happy Birthday Jerry Campbell</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9 am Quilters Guild 10 am Women's Bible Class 2 pm Community Center Meeting Happy Birthday Bob Mai</p>	<p>15</p> <p>10:30 ZOOM Bible Class Happy Birthday Donna Crouch Harold Sollenberger</p>	<p>16</p> <p>12:30 Blood Drive</p>	17	<p>18</p> <p>5:00 PM Episcopal Church Service</p>
<p>19</p> <p>9:00 AM Adult Bible School 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal 10:30 AM Worship Service Communion Happy Birthday Kent Matson</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Happy Birthday Gustavo Romero</p>	<p>21</p> <p>10 am Women's Bible Class Happy Birthday Max Ringer</p>	<p>22</p> <p>10:30 ZOOM Bible Class Thanksgiving Eve Service 7 pm</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Thanksgiving Day Office Closed Happy Birthday William Glenn Lucille Ringer</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Happy Birthday Tom Uehlin</p>	<p>25</p> <p>5:00 PM Episcopal Church Service</p>
<p>26</p> <p>9:00 AM Adult Bible School 9:00 am Choir Rehearsal 10:30 AM Worship Service Non-communion Happy Birthday Candy McAllister</p>	27	<p>28</p> <p>10 am Women's Bible Class</p>	<p>29</p> <p>10:30 ZOOM Bible Class Happy Anniversary Roger & Linda Andersen</p>	<p>30</p> <p>4pm Milledgeville committee meeting</p>	1	<p>2</p> <p>Hanging of the greens 5:00 PM Episcopal Church Service</p>