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# Proclaiming Liberty in Christ in the City

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NEWSLETTER | ADVENT 2023

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## Solid Rock



It's finally happening: the last vacant lot on our block is being developed. A decade ago, nearly 75% of our block was vacant, overgrown lots. And a few decades before that, every lot had buildings that declined and had to be

torn down.

We live in a society that wants everything right now—from takeout food to full-blown urban development. But good things take time.

Watching the foundation for a new building erected across the street reminds me of a passage I read during house blessings:

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who builds his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on the rock.

“And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” (Matt 7:24-27).

Logos Lutheran in Center City Philadelphia continues to build on the solid rock of Christ, even during difficult times. The past few months have indeed been difficult—we have had to say goodbye to several core members who moved away from the city for employment and relationships. While we celebrate the graduations, teaching contracts, medical residencies, and marriages of our members, bidding farewell to these faithful Christians this summer has felt particularly painful.

God has drawn more incoming university students to us this fall, so we continue the work that PLM has always done: proclaiming the gospel of Christ in the heart of the city.

We pray that Christ would continue to build Logos Lutheran on the foundation of his word and on the sacraments so it can be said, “*It did not fall because it had been founded on the rock.*”



(above) View of new construction from the Kieselowsky's roof.



(left) New construction across the street from the Kieselowsky house.

## Meet Vicar Alexander Ogden



Alexander Ogden was born and adopted from Kemerovo, Russia. He was raised in the metro Detroit area and then attended college at Concordia University Chicago in River Forest, Illinois. While there he studied theology, biblical languages, and psychology. At college he developed his love for the liturgy and an interest in philosophy, early Christianity, and novelists Ernest Hemingway and Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

Taking two years off between his undergrad studies and seminary, Alexander worked several odd jobs until he began working at an inner-city mission church in Southwest Detroit. It was there that he spent his days working and serving the homeless, the impoverished, and the community at large. While at the mission church, Family of God, he worked there several days a week delivering meals to the homeless, helping lead Bible studies, assisting in services, and getting to know the various individuals who came through the church doors.

Afterward, he began his studies at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. Alexander is excited to be in an inner-city environment again and is looking forward to growing, learning, and developing relationships with everyone he meets. In his spare time, he enjoys collecting and listening to records, going to the movies, reading, and writing poetry, and improving his film photography abilities. He hopes to get back into cycling and running this year as well as attempting to get some poetry published formally.

Alexander is excited and eager to continue to learn more about Philadelphia, her people, and her history. But beyond this and more importantly, he wants to develop relationships with the people of St. John's and Logos and serve them as he is best able. It is with great pleasure that he will begin and continue his education and formation as a student and looks forward to what the next year will offer.



*(above)  
Alexander  
Ogden was  
installed as  
year-long  
vicar in  
August.*

*(right)  
Summer  
social event  
with Logos  
members.*



## Remember PLM in Your Giving

Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries (PLM) relies upon donations to care for the people of the city.

Your contribution allows Pastor Kieselowsky and the vicar to offer social gatherings (*below*) and meals to local university students and to connect with unbelieving individuals across the city. Your gift supports Pastor's Bible studies and care for the least among us, especially the incarcerated and the homeless. Your generosity allows the doors of Logos' chapel to open each Saturday to welcome all who seek God's gifts.

Thank you for remembering us in your annual giving!

Scan this QR code to give online.

*PLM is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Registered Service Organization (RSO) of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.*



## Distance Catechesis

Pastor Kieselowsky and the vicars continue to catechize and instruct a military family who had been baptized by Pastor Kieselowsky in Philadelphia. They now live in South Korea without access to a Lutheran church. We praise God that one son was finally able to take communion in Oregon while the family was in the United States on military leave.



*(above & below) Screenshots from Zoom meetings, led by Pastor Kieselowsky and Vicar Ogden, that focus upon memorizing Luther's Small Catechism and discussing the week's Gospel reading. (left) The family attended a Lutheran church while on leave to receive communion for the first time in a year.*



*(above) Friends and members of Logos Lutheran meet for dinner in Philadelphia.*



*(left) Jesse Greenhagen dances with his wife Kristina at their wedding reception. He completed his vicarage and has returned to the seminary to complete his studies.*





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*Thank you for your continued support!*

**Please Pray For . . .**

- **Incarcerated men** in the federal detention center in Philadelphia
- **Logos Lutheran** leaders and members
- **Vicar Alexander Ogden**
- **Pastor Kieselowsky** and his family



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NEWSLETTER | EASTER 2023

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## All the Lies

*Rev Rob Kieselowsky, Executive Director*



Do you ever get tired of the lies?

Lies permeate the business world in its drive to grow at all costs. Marketing hype constantly bombards us with the latest and greatest. And we know that very few of our purchases live up to the hype.

Lies get politicians elected, lies about who they are and all they will accomplish. And we burn out quickly each election cycle.

The city promotes its own brand of deceit. The lie that financial success will bring happiness. The lie that popular social agendas will bring meaning. The lie that political action alone will bring a just and peaceful society. And then disillusionment sets in, and people are left desperate and without hope.

I feel pressure each time I write a newsletter to hype up our work in Philadelphia. Sadly, even the church sometimes falls prey to hype in our church planting by promising more than Christ himself has promised.

Over-inflated promises, deception, and outright lies abound in our world. I have reached the conviction that the devil uses this flood of lies to distract us, to jade our ability to hear truth and to stop our faith in the good news of Jesus Christ.

God cuts through the chatter with the clear truth of Easter.

Christ Jesus, our gracious Savior, took on human flesh to die. Our Lord Jesus was indeed betrayed, crucified and rose gloriously from the dead on the third day.

It is true. It is a fact.

Christ is no liar; what he has promised, he will deliver. Just as he rose from the dead, he promises to give us and all those who have died in the faith resurrection. It seems too good to be true, but it is not. Those who we have loved who have died in the faith, we will see again. And we will see our risen Lord.

Just as the resurrection was a miracle, so faith in the resurrection is a miracle. So Christ kept his promise to send the Holy Spirit to work faith in hard hearts and keeps believers strong in their conviction.

This wonderful truth that keeps the work of Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries moving forward.

The light shines brightest in the darkness. The Lord has continued his work in the city of Philadelphia, a city of 1.6 million people for whom Christ shed his life-giving blood.

We push aside the lies upon lies and rejoice in the hope that Christ has conquered death and the grave. The devil's days are numbered.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

## Former Member Ordained

By Rev Kieselowsky

A few years ago, a man named Adam contacted me about the Lutheran faith. He came to me with a knowledge of and reverence for God's Word and was interested in the Lutheran Church.

Over the course of three years, I had the privilege to catechize him and his wife in the Lutheran faith. During that time, I also baptized their six children and began teaching them Luther's Small Catechism.

Adam expressed interest in serving as a pastor and began leading a Lutheran study with a group of Christians who spoke Amharic, the main language of Ethiopia. I helped him start the process of colloquy, working toward ordination in the Lutheran Church.

Within a short time, an opportunity arose for Adam to move to Boston, where he continued the colloquy process until he was ordained this year (*below*).

I see this often in Philadelphia: work that sometimes spans years, the work of catechism and teaching, often benefits others in ways I cannot fathom. Here, a brother in Christ becomes a fellow pastor who can help minister to the Amharic-speaking Christians in Boston and perhaps around the world.

## Faith in the Resurrection

I came across this picture recently of a poignant grave marker (*below*) in an Utah cemetery. Atop its marble base, a boy springs from his wheelchair, reaching toward heaven.



The piece, designed by the boy's father, is intended to inspire hope in Jesus Christ.

The image of should remind us all of the very true reality that because of our baptism into Christ's death, we live in the hope of the resurrection.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11: 25-6)

## Life in the City

After six years in our neighborhood, we have made significant connections with neighbors. One neighbor offered our eldest work at her local coffee shop. Others have hired our daughters to babysit and help around their homes.

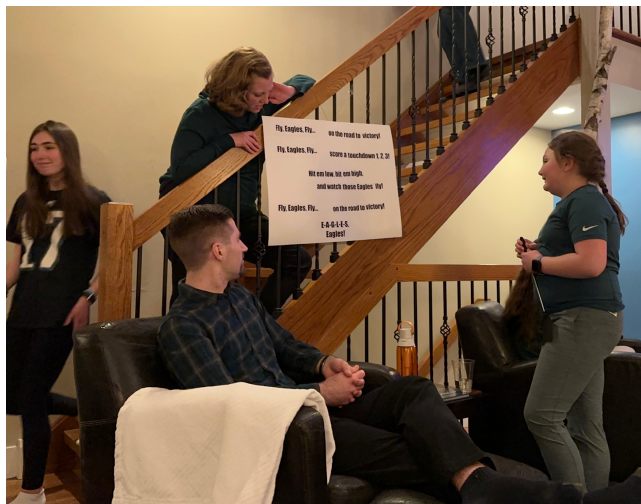


## Super Bowl Party

This year's annual Super Bowl party was particularly exciting as the Philadelphia Eagles faced off against the Kansas City Chiefs.

Members of Logos Lutheran and friends gathered in the Kieselowsky's living room to watch the game (*below*) and to enjoy game-day food. The youngest Kieselowsky sister led the group in the Eagles' fight song (*right*) whenever the team scored a touchdown.

Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries offers regular social events throughout the year to encourage local members as they study and work in the Philadelphia area.





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