



Philadelphia
Lutheran
Ministries

Proclaiming Liberty in Christ in the City

NEWSLETTER | REFORMATION 2024

Preaching the Narrow Way on Broad Street

By Rob Kieselowsky, Executive Director



Broad Street, the longest continuous street in America, is a big deal in Philadelphia. With three lanes running in each direction, it serves as a hub of city life, steering cars, motorcycles, bikes and pedestrians from North Philadelphia around City Hall down to the major sports stadiums.

Our chapel at Logos Lutheran sits on Broad Street, about five blocks from City Hall. During services, we hear the vehicles revving their engines and the voices of pedestrians as they move up and down the street, reminding us of the sea of humanity that tunes out the call of Christ's Word each day.

Broad is the way that leads to ruin.

Jesus warned of the danger of the broad path: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matt 7:13-14) Those who find themselves on the broad street theologically may choose lanes of disbelief and cynicism or may find themselves in messy religious mixtures that warp the true teaching of Scripture.

A few months ago, an international visitor suggested to me that Jesus is an avatar, just one of many expressions of God. He had embraced a form of worldly wisdom that says humans can find God in many forms of religion, an idea that can easily find its way into everyone's thinking, including ours. I pointed him to the exclusive claims of Christ and a vigorous discussion ensued.

The visitor gave me a hug after attending service. I told him that I pray the Lord will use the visit to grab his attention and draw him to the truth.

Even those in the church, sadly, may walk the same broad path. The Archbishop of Philadelphia of the Roman Catholic Church issued a letter to the Jewish community at Passover wishing them hope, peace and blessings. On the surface, this sounds very neighborly. But it is neither loving nor right for the archbishop to encourage his Jewish neighbors to continue in their darkness as they walk the broad way to ruin.

Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matt 7:21-23) Pastors and bishops should guide people to the narrow gate that leads to life.



A few do indeed find that narrow way. This year, a young man, born in Vietnam to a Buddhist family, sat with me two dozen times for instruction in the Christian faith from scratch. He studied, read the Scriptures, and over time expressed his desire to be baptized at Pentecost (*left*). Thanks be to God!

Continue to pray for our work in Philadelphia on Broad Street that Christ would bring more through the narrow gate into a life of faith.

Meet Vicar Adam Thiel



Adam Thiel, born in Saginaw, MI, has spent most of life living in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan surrounded by forests and rivers.

He married his beautiful bride, Jessica, in August 2018 before they moved to Canton, MI for him to study business at Concordia University (Ann Arbor). While earning a bachelor's in business, Adam also took several theology classes in preparation for possible seminary studies. During this time, he also worked as a project manager for North Point Fisheries Management where he led a crew building new and restoring old trout habitat throughout several branches of the AuSable and Manistee rivers.

He began his theological studies in earnest at Concordia Theological Seminary (Fort Wayne) where his father had graduated thirty years earlier. Through the seminary's placement process, he has been given the honor of being the vicar for Philadelphia Lutheran Ministries.

In his spare time, Adam enjoys working on fine arts and photography, collecting and playing board games, and exploring nature. He and his wife hope to get a good start on learning the German language together during their year in Philly.

Adam is excited to explore Philadelphia, especially its art and history, and to explore a new way of life in the big city. However, he is most looking forward to growing and learning from his time serving the people of St John and Logos Lutheran under Pastor Kieselowsky.

Reading Revelation

By Vicar Adam Thiel

We have begun studying the Book of Revelation at Logos Lutheran, and as we do so, we must remember that this is “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). Those five words keep us from wandering away from what is important: our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation is not meant to be secret knowledge that we can use to determine when our Lord will return. We can't know; our Lord says in the Gospel of Matthew, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (24:36). Instead, Revelation is meant to be a reassurance that our Lord will return, so we must be prepared at all times for his return. Revelation, therefore, is a book illustrating the hope of the saints both here and in heaven.

Heaven is often thought to be the final destination, yet those saints who have gone before us in the faith know that their hope is still incomplete. The souls of the saints cry out for the final judgment: “They cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’” (Rev. 6:10) They cry out for the day of judgment because on that day they will be raised from the dead and receive their glorified bodies. Their desire is for “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev.21:1), which will be the dwelling place of God with man (Rev. 21:3), and “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Our hope as the saints on this side of heaven is to know that the Lord will return, whether to take us to himself or on the day of judgment. Our hope does not preclude trials and tribulations; in fact, our hope and faith make trial and tribulation all but inevitable. If it were easy, our Lord would not have to call his church to repentance in the seven introductions to this letter for churches. Seven represents completeness; this letter is for the whole church. *(continued on next page)*

Life in Philadelphia

When spring arrives in Philadelphia, the Kieselowsky family fills four softball bags with gear for games with both recreational leagues and local public school teams. Last season, two Kieselowsky sisters had the fun experience of playing in the city-wide softball championship (*below*) on a field in the shadows of Citizens Bank Park, home of the Philadelphia Phillies.

Summer brought visits from friends and family, including a highlight when Pastor Jeremy Swem (*below*) brought his family to Philly. Their visit included a tour of Independence Hall (*right*), the Liberty Bell and swamped city sidewalks during a torrential downpour.



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Reading Revelation (*continued from page 2*)

We are all called to be faithful witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ; if it were easy, we would not also be called conquerors for being faithful to death. To be a saint on this side of heaven is to know that the work of Christ continues on earth even through trial and tribulation. And to the faithful witnesses, the conquerors, our Lord gives seven promises to take us to be with him in his kingdom. But until that final hour comes, the church on earth and her mission will remain until Christ returns to claim her.



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Please Pray For . . .

- **The people of Philadelphia**
- **Logos Lutheran** members, leaders, and university students
- **Incarcerated men** in the city who attend Bible Study
- **Vicar Adam Thiel** and his wife
- **Pastor Kieselowsky** and his family



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NEWSLETTER | EASTER 2024

The First Fruit and Sower

By Rob Kieselowsky, Executive Director



“But Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
I Cor 15:20

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!
Alleluia!

As we celebrate the resurrection in the city, we are mindful that our Lord’s death was for everyone, including for those who would reject him and mock him as he was dying on the cross. It’s God’s very nature to be lavish and indiscriminate with his love. His first miracle at Cana foreshadowed the reality of his death on behalf of everyone. At the wedding, Jesus lavishly gave the most excellent wine to party goers who did not deserve it and could not appreciate it.

In the same way, God generously sends this message of the death and resurrection of our Lord to all people, as he has taught in his parable of the Sower and the seed (Matt 13:1-23). Our Lord is not calculated as he distributes his powerful Word but scatters the seed over rocky, shallow, scorched, thorny landscapes as well as the good soil. He sends the Word out to everyone.

Our Lord’s parable encourages us to keep going and to keep praying. In his ministry, Christ, the Sower of the seed, sent out his word to everyone. In his resurrection, Christ became the first fruit of the harvest.

I’m not convinced that human hearts in the city are all that different than in the countryside or in the suburbs. The forces aligned against God’s Word are the same everywhere. And so as you pray for the work in Philadelphia, pray specifically that the work of the devil would be thwarted. That the Word of God would take root in the hearts of those who hear, and that they would be able to withstand times of testing. And pray that riches and cares and pleasures of life would be seen from God’s perspective and would not choke the Word of God in the hearts of those who hear.

When I visit churches, and I do like to visit churches to look at things from a wider perspective, I like to work through this parable. It reminds us that for God all things are possible and that his Word is mighty and fruitful beyond all measure.

Our Lord will accomplish his purposes, but he has included you in this work. We thank God that you see value in what we are doing in an area that churches have abandoned. We appreciate your support and your prayers.

“As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty” (Matt 13:23).



Kieselowsky sisters help on the family farm (above).

Heights, Depths, Breadth, Width

By Vicar Alexander Ogden

So often in our modern age we are bombarded with thoughts of anything but of the divine. We are constantly torn away from our bridegroom with useless cares and concerns. However, the end of Romans chapter eight



reminds us that nothing can take us away from him. Paul lays out a list of things that cannot take us away from our Savior's pierced hands.

His list is at first glance seems obtuse and difficult to understand, but what Paul is referring to is the demonic, the anti-Christian, and the like. He says that neither death, life, angels, rulers, things present nor things to come, powers, heights, depths, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-9). As a vicar in Philadelphia, there is so much to distract, from the city itself to all it has to offer to the cars driving past my apartment at night. Yet with all the background noise, there is one noise that appears to me in the silence, it is like the still small whisper that Elijah experiences in the cave (I Kings 19:11-13). Elijah is likewise bombarded with a gale-force wind, an earthquake, and a fiery inferno, and yet God is not in any of these events. Instead, God appears in the still, small voice. This voice is the voice of God. And while we Christians may not experience the same series of terrestrial events rocking and shaking our world, we do have Scripture.

And what does Scripture tell us time and time again? It tells us that the Lord is near to the broken hearted, the downtrodden, the crestfallen, the humble and weak. It is in turning to Scripture that I remember when the world's voice sounds like a tornado, when my world is shaking and crumbling around me like an earthquake, when my sinful passions try to burn me down that God is still there with me. In his tender mercy, he whispers to me that he loves me and that this divine love has been made manifest through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son for me.

In this revelation, through and in the Bible, I am reminded that Christ conquered the heights, depths, breadth, and width as he was extended on the cross for all to see. Reminded that the powers and principalities of the evil one were utterly crushed at the foot of the cross. And in my moments of doubt, or fear, or anxious worry, I let go of my sorrowful groaning and know that nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

For it was love that brought Christ to the cross. And it was in love that he breathed out his last breath that I might have eternal life, salvation, and the forgiveness of my sins. And because of Christ I am not longer regarded as a sheep to be slaughtered, for the sacrificial lamb died for me.

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Christmas at the Prison

Part of PLM's dedication to proclaiming Christ to the city of Philadelphia includes visiting the poor and incarcerated. Christ emphasizes the connection between serving him and serving the sick and those in prison (Matt 25:37-39), and this remains a priority for Pastor Kieselowsky.

In December, the chaplain of the detention center asked Pastor conduct a Christmas service which gave him an opportunity to share the good news of Christ's birth with a group of men.

Since then, the prison has allowed a small number of Bible study leaders back into the facility to hold Bible studies and prayer groups. After a four year covid related stoppage, pastor has been going regularly since the beginning of February. Thanks be to God!

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you are also in the body" (Hebrews 13:1-3).



When a couple from Logos Lutheran moved to New York City and no longer would be using their car (above), they graciously donated it to a person in need of transportation. We praise God for the kindness demonstrated regularly by the members of the congregation as they live and work in Philadelphia.



Christmas in the city (above) included a cookie-making party at the Kieselowsky home.



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