

Final Things



by Mathew Block
Editor, *The Canadian Lutheran*

With this issue of the magazine, I say farewell. For a little more than six years now I've served as editor of *The Canadian Lutheran* and communications manager for Lutheran Church–Canada (LCC). The past year and a half of that have actually been in a deployed capacity, as changes in my wife's employment took us to rural Manitoba. Now seems the right time to step back and let another take up the reins.

This is a period of change for LCC. Our president of many years is returning to parish ministry, while our newly elected president enters into national ministry for the first time. Our international mission director is soon to retire, and the search for his successor is underway. And our church body is in the midst of restructuring the way we operate, following votes at our national convention in October.

In many ways, then, this a natural time for me to say goodbye. Our church is about to experience a new beginning of sorts—but a new beginning by definition means something else is coming to an end.

In late November, we marked the last Sunday of the Church Year. The day is set aside to anticipate the return of Christ in glory, at which time He will bring this present age to a close. "Then comes the end," St. Paul writes, "when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and every power" (1 Corinthians 15:24).

This world as we know it will come to an end. But it is not *the* end. In fact, in a way it actually marks the beginning of eternity—"world without end," as we sometimes put it in the liturgy. "Behold, I am making all things

new!" our Lord promises (Revelation 21:5). At His second coming, Christ will usher in a new heaven and a new earth. He will welcome the faithful into His kingdom. Others He will cast out, just as they had cast Him far from their hearts throughout this earthly life.

For Christians, the "end of the age" is an occasion for hope and not terror. We who have been redeemed by God, baptized into His name, taught His holy Word, nourished on His body and blood, and forgiven of our sins will find a God of Mercy. At the judgment, we will find Jesus Christ—the God who stepped down from heaven and became Man, who bore our sins and suffered judgment in our place. We will find salvation, new life, even as this old one comes to an end.

In a similar way, Christmas too can be thought of as a kind of "ending." The incarnation of Christ precipitated the fulfilment—the end, if you will—of the previous covenant, as a greater one was introduced. "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood," Jesus told His disciples at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20). The old covenant with its temple sacrifices and burnt offerings was drawing to a close. A final sacrifice was being prepared: Christ, our new Passover Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world.

These "endings"—the first and second comings of Christ—far outstrip in significance the smaller "endings" our church body will experience over the next few months. But that does not mean they are unimportant. They may bring sorrow as we say goodbye to certain people and structures we have known and loved. But there is also reason for joy, for celebration in

the new beginnings and opportunities these changes will afford.

It has been my honour to serve our church as its communications manager over the past six years. I hope you have found in this magazine resources that have encouraged you in your walk with Christ, fostered greater faith in Him, and helped you to better understand what it is we believe as Lutherans and why. I am grateful to all those who have contributed to the magazine during this time, as writers, editors, doctrinal reviewers, artists, graphic designers, and website technicians. May God bless each of you for the role you have played in making this little magazine possible.

The prophet Isaiah writes: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bring good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (52:7). I pray we have contributed, in part, to that glorious "publication" of Christ and the salvation He has won for humankind.

Going forward, I will continue to serve the International Lutheran Council in its communications needs, and I look forward to supporting my successor in LCC when she or he is appointed. In the meantime, I hope you will join me in welcoming Ian Adnams (my predecessor in this position), who will be serving as interim communications manager during the transition process.

If you're ever in Swan River, Manitoba, drop me a line. (And if you know anyone there who might be interested in joining a confessional Lutheran Bible study or fellowship, let me know!)