

February 2018

Dear Friends,

“I, Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him that heareth say, ‘Come.’ And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Revelation 22:16-17

Philipp Nicolai was a hymn writer who lived in Westphalia, the northwest region of Germany during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Nicolai was perhaps best known for writing and composing the music for the hymns “Wake, Awake, For Night is Flying” and “O Morning Star How Fair and Bright” (# 159 and # 66 in our hymnal, *The Hymns and Songs of Zion*.) These two hymns were so well regarded, that they became known as the King and Queen of Chorales.

Nicolai also served as a Lutheran pastor in the village of Unna during a dreadful time of pestilence. Between July of 1597 and January of 1598, over 1300 people died of the plague. During a single week in August, 170 individuals were victims of this deadly pestilence. In the midst of this deep distress, Nicolai wrote a series of meditations entitled “Freuden Spiegel” or “Mirror of Joy” in English. It was his prayer that these meditations would bring comfort to his readers in the midst of their great sorrow. Both “Wake, Awake” and “O Morning Star” arose from Nicolai’s “Mirror of Joy.”

In one version of “O Morning Star”, Nicolai reminds us that God blesses us even in the midst of sorrow “*Earth’s deep sadness may perplex us, and distress us, yet with heavenly joy You bless us.*”

God not only speaks light and life into a world of suffering and death, but also overcomes the dominion of darkness by the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the forgiveness of sins, Life and salvation through the Cross of Christ. Nicolai echoes this thought in the fourth verse of the same hymn:

*“Almighty Father, in Your Son
You loved us when not yet begun
Was this old earth’s foundation!
Your Son has ransomed us in love
To live in Him here and above;
This is Your great salvation.
Alleluia!
Christ the living,
To us giving
Life forever,
Keeps us Yours and fails us never!”*

Thanks be to God for His Son Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star, who paid our ransom with His Holy and precious blood, who gives us life and who never fails us.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ²⁰ Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...”
I Peter 1:18-20

**Yours in Christ,
Pastor Chuck Bylkas**



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Winter Night of Music @ Zion Lutheran Church RESCHEDULED.

Unfortunately, due to some inclement weather in December and a date conflict in January, we have now rescheduled the Night of Music for February 13 at 7PM. Refreshments will be served with support from Thrivent Financial. A free will offering will benefit the seminary.



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HERE'S ANOTHER WAY YOU CAN HELP THE SEMINARY

Several years ago, the Seminary board of directors established the Inter-Lutheran Seminary Endowment Fund. Funds contributed to the endowment are not used for current day to day operations. Only the annual earnings of the endowment will be used for the seminary's needs thereby ensuring the continued existence of this funding source. This is the preferred method used by many non-profit entities, especially ongoing religiously focused organizations such as seminaries.

While this is an excellent strategy, it has proven a challenge for us to actually meet the minimum funding requirements. Until now, the fund has existed but remained unfunded. By the Lord's grace we have been blessed with a large contribution to fund the Inter-Lutheran Seminary Endowment Fund. We would love to build on this generous contribution to grow our endowment into a major source of ongoing seminary support.

Although the seminary still needs the financial ongoing regular contributions of our supporters, please consider the endowment fund for your planned giving needs. The seminary has chosen the InFaith Community Endowment Fund (the renamed Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation) to administer our endowment fund. They will provide experienced legal advice to help guide you with any contribution questions done through estate planning in addition to lump sum contributions, IRAs, property and securities. For more additional information, please contact Kirk Otto, Jr. at (715) 294-4343 or Cheryl Hendrickson at (906)482-3337.