



# CLB

*A Disciple-Making Movement*

Church of the Lutheran Brethren

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PRES. PAUL LARSON

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**KING**  
me BC18

The expression “KING me!” is as worn as middle-aged memories of earlier days spent round a checker board. Yet, it is arresting and explosively current. Because, said this way, it is not the typical way in which we commonly use and hear the noun “king”—as when talking about some important personage from history, or to describe the potential title of a royal wedding guest, or the moniker attached to a particularly dominant sport figure, etc.

Here, “KING me!” takes and twirls about something static, it flips the verbal board. “Kingdom” no longer is a latent locale; and “King” cannot possibly be some dead guy. No, the expression “KING me!” is infused with active verb-like force, movement, and expectancy. Someone is active, and radically so.

Now, one can possibly hear “KING

me!” in two entirely (really diametrically opposed) manners. One places the force and destination on “me.” I am being “king-ed,” coronated, catered to, served, elevated, set above the pawn-ordinary spawn of Adam, with all the rights, prides and privileges of such a title. “KING me!” then perhaps, is the unstated inferred aspiration of the revelers along Palm Sunday Trail. The cheering spectators call ostensibly for the kingship of the man on the donkey. But they are truly cheering their own accession.

Yet this arresting turn of a word, the converting of noun to verb, “KING me!”, should be heard in an entirely different way. “KING me!” is the cry of one moved only by outside hand, to the end of “the board,” where then there is no other place to move, no other option, nor rescue from opposition. Hear the cry differently: coming from abject humility, having somehow snaked along still alive through the pitfalls of the deadly game to this place, where there are no more moves nor possible wheeling about to further trudge dimly along. “KING me!” now is not personal triumph, but an appeal and submission to Sovereign reign and mission. It is confession of need, and faith! “KING me!” means not that now there is some “King Paul” lounging about the checkerboard (or Jubilee diamond :). But it means Paul has a King. Paul has been gloriously taken in; taken over (utter bankruptcy yielding to the most benevolent new management);

there’s come an overlain identity, an alien righteousness, a reassigned calling and an indwelled empowerment. This is ALL about the King and nothing so much about the peon.

In Christ, by faith—first at baptism, affirmed in growing conscious confession, communion-enlivened by the Lord’s body (and the Lord’s Body), by the work of the Word daily dying and rising to repentance and faith—THE Lord of the Church, Christ Jesus, is “kingdom-ing me.” As my friend, Dr. Gaylan Mathiesen, is fond of saying (paraphrased here), it is not so much that the Church has a mission and possesses God’s Kingdom, but that God’s Mission has a Church and is possessed by his advancing Kingdom.

Do you know what the checker pieces on the simple board game are called? I learned recently they are called men or sometimes stones. We are only, ever, men. There is only one King. But his reign arriving to us and through us has such retrofitted purpose and vigor for us stone-men! The game-changing prediction of Ezekiel comes to mind, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ...Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes. ...I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will

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cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees..." (Ezekiel 36:22-23, 25-27). Oh, Yes! Do Lord, do Lord, do come and Kingdom me!!

So, "KING me!" is the theme of our Church of the Lutheran Brethren's 2018 Biennial Convention, and I welcome you to it! We are seeking God in his Word via his servant-speakers to plumb for us the Kingdom parables found in Matthew 13, and Christ's call and enabling our Church to be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's Kingdom here on earth. The Lutheran Brethren are a people basking in Grace, and by grace we are a missionary people!

You have made considerable sacrifice of time and energy to bless our movement just by being here. As these days of our biennial convention proceed, you will be summoned to give even more of yourself to listen, dialogue and engage further in the worthy partnership of mission we share. It is my sincere desire that at the end of our convention, you will return home blessed with even more than you invested here. It is further my prayer that beyond our agenda of business meetings, workshops and gatherings, you will be renewed in your vision and passion for God's "kingdom-ing" of the CLB. I pray we leave here moved from being helpless

"stones" to being the King's women and men and congregations eager to give ourselves, give our children, give our vocations, give our retirements, give our churches—all in faith-filled surrender to the Mission of our King. All so that his Kingdom would be mantled over us and manifested in the passions and priorities of our lives and congregations.

I believe the Church of the Lutheran Brethren occupies a unique and critical role in Christ's body. We have a gift of theology and mission to humbly share within the larger Church, and to our neighbors near and an ocean away. I believe our movement is a needed voice, a treasure needing yet to be uncovered more.

While you will notice much that is familiar at this convention, there is also new fare. The 2018 CLB biennial convention will convene with a brief business session at Bethel Lutheran Church sanctuary at 8:30AM on Saturday. The workshop intensives which follow are not presented as optional pre-convention sessions, but as an integral part of it. One of our priorities is to strengthen the expectancy and commitment of our leadership base to be blessed by continuing formation. These workshop intensives will provide potent relevancy for mission and theological refreshment.

The Saturday evening worship service of convention (Lord and contractors willing!) will be held in the new-car-smelling sanctuary of Good Shepherd

LBC on the west side of Fergus Falls! (Good Shepherd also will be one of the Sunday morning convention sermon sites, and plans are underway for the joyful, grateful dedication of their sanctuary that Sunday morning.)

We are again assisting pastors, lay leaders and congregations to more fully participate in our convention by providing the uploaded convention Sunday sermon (pre-recorded) for all CLB congregations to have the option of using for their own convention Sunday worship. This serves as a means of covering the pulpit while pastors are at convention, but more importantly to engage congregations with the convention theme and with their greater faith community. Also, we will have shared resources for the same Sunday morning convention sermon to area CLB churches within one hour of our convention site who choose to participate in our convention theme. These pastors will preach the Sunday morning convention text and theme. We do this to encourage our delegates to be introduced to the many faces of the CLB community, and to have a growing fellowship with the gifts and personalities of our rich and diverse congregational life.

Also, CLB Jubilee is back! With some logistical improvements and some broadened offerings, we have specifically provided an afternoon and evening set aside for celebrating and growing the community of our fellowship. Whether reunion with old friends, or meeting and

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making new ones, convention seems often a time when one leaves feeling cheated that there was so little opportunity to enjoy friendships old and new. (Some were even formerly known to have skipped a session or two because that community was so desired!) So, if you can't beat 'em, give 'em great food, fine music, sunshine (hopefully!), old tyme baseball, kubb, and just a good healthy dose of conversation and laughter! We will also take special opportunity at this Jubilee to honor Dr. Eugene Boe for the gift of his twenty years as academic dean of our Lutheran Brethren Seminary. There will be a time for Gene to share his story of faith in Christ, followed by an ice cream social in his honor. Our Sunday CLB Jubilee is a gift to remind us how privileged we are to belong with each other, and to meet new #weareLBChurch friends.

As at last convention, great coffee and pastries will be served up Monday and Tuesday mornings prior to our "Morning Light" 40-minute worship/teaching starts to our convention business days. Bethel's fellowship hall will be converted into a mission display/interactive booth area.

Elsewhere in this Convention booklet you will find in the Director and Associate reports a wealth of information on CLB mission accomplished and ministry plans ahead. Some of my own *State of the Church* perceptions are included in the introduction to the Parochial Report.

Let me add these words of gratitude, joy and remembrance: I am supremely grateful for the team of mission directors and associates, regional pastors, LBS administration and faculty, support staff, and the affiliate ministries that make up our centralized ministries! May I add that as I travel the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, I am also so very sincerely enthused and appreciative as I see lay leaders and pastors so devoted to our King, and willing and desiring his Kingdom to take hold of them and

their congregation for his Mission. Our missionaries, international, and national church planters—you lead and model for us the reminder that we are essentially one people with one purpose as a disciple-making movement. Our prayers and love embrace and send you, not as mercenaries sent to do something in our place, but as the vanguard of a people graciously overcome by the Coronated One who has made us poor stones his living potent missionary people.

The denominational leadership team and I are here to serve you. It has been a humbling privilege and inspiring challenge to serve in this role for this term. I sometimes explain my role to strangers something like this: "I am an associate pastor of a very large extensive multi-site Church!" I believe that's true. At the same time, synodical leadership are only a reflection and extension of you! From our birth as a movement, the denomination has been and is the *child* of the congregations, not vice versa. Your generous, sacrificial response of financial support and interceding prayers to sustain and advance our mission partnership is vitally needed and greatly valued.

Since our last convention we have said good-bye for now to these colleagues and friends: Rev. George Aase, Evelyn Christensen, Carol Erickson, Rev. Torgeir Haugland, Mabel Helland, Rev. David Langager, Rev. Morris Larsen, Rev. Ken Narvesen, Orpha Raun, Ruth Thompson, Rev. Richard Vettrus, Rev. Elwin Walvatne, and Rev. Morris Werdal.

We have welcomed to our band of pastoral leadership by ordination: Kristian Anderson, Ben Bigaouette, Christopher Hartley, Ben Hosch, Clint Knutson, Caleb Larson, Andrew Olsen, Fred Scragg, Kevin Skaret, Matthew Sonnenberg, Jordan Spina.

Many have been praying, and many are expectant, to see how God will move among us in this convention together.

Pray for the presenters, speakers, worship leaders, servers and for all who listen. Pray for all stone people and stone hearts whom the King, our King, has designs and love and power to bring under his cross-hewn crown to extend His Kingdom in advance of His sure soon return!

Grace & Peace,



Rev. Paul M. Larson, President  
Church of the Lutheran Brethren