

---

# LEVENHAGEN UPDATE

## SUMMER 2021

---

### Family Update



Nathan and Aaron returned "home" to attend the Indianapolis 500 (May 2021)

The summer has gone by very quickly for the Levenhagen family! Nathan and I had the opportunity to take a quick trip back to Indianapolis to attend the Indianapolis 500. It's very strange to stay in a hotel in your own hometown! The photo to the right shows Nathan in front of the famous Gate 1 entrance to Indianapolis Motor Speedway on the night before the race.

After the kids' school year ended, we enjoyed a family road trip through South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado. 3,400 miles in just over a week! We were there during the major heat wave that covered much of the West earlier this summer. So, it was super-hot, but still amazingly beautiful country! Oh yeah....and we found the best little ice cream place we've ever been to:

Moo's in Jackson Hole, WY. Go there and get the Cookies-'n'-Cream ice cream. You won't be sorry!



Faith at the Snake River Overlook in Grand Teton National Park (June 2021)

#### THE LEVENHAGENS

1127 Blendon Place  
Saint Louis, MO 63117-1967  
+1 (317) 966-9204 *phone/text*  
[aaron.levenhagen@outlook.com](mailto:aaron.levenhagen@outlook.com)  
[levenhagena@csll.edu](mailto:levenhagena@csll.edu)

Back in St. Louis, I completed a seven-week summer language intensive in biblical Hebrew. It was grueling, but I learned so much. I continued to occasionally lead the liturgy, preach, teach adult Bible class, and lead worship services at a local senior center as part of my first-year fieldwork assignment at Timothy Lutheran Church. As I mentioned earlier, we will be transitioning my fieldwork to Zion Lutheran Church for the 2021-2022 school year. Coursework will begin again on Aug. 30<sup>th</sup> and shortly thereafter we'll begin the process for vicarage placement.



Aaron and fellow seminarians in the summer Hebrew language intensive (June-August 2021)



Jill and Nathan near Oxbow Bend in Grand Teton National Park (June 2021)

Jill is the hero of the family. She holds everything together, tirelessly serving both me and the kids. At the same time, she began working remotely part-time for the Arnold P. Gold Foundation doing web design, social media, and other responsibilities relating to communications and messaging. The foundation works to promote compassionate, collaborative, and scientifically excellent healthcare. It is based just outside of New York City, but Jill does a fantastic job of making sure that distance is never an issue! She has also done some volunteer work with the LWML office here at the Seminary. They are always looking for creative ways to get their message out and to connect with the next generation of pastors.

Nathan spent the summer working at the Gateway Kartplex in the infield of WWT Raceway in Madison, IL. His passion is motorsports, and he hopes to pursue a career in that field after school—so this 100% fits! He works a lot of hours in the summer heat but has a great attitude about it. During the summer he also competed in a karting championship held at the Kartplex using rental karts and did really well. He steadily improved into a regular contender in the “light” class, notching several poles, a win, and a few podium finishes as well. He began his junior year at Clayton High School on Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup>. This is the first time he has attended in-person school since we moved, so we’re all



Nathan is working at the Gateway Kartplex at WWT Raceway just east of St. Louis. Here he is (front right) starting on pole for a bi-monthly competitive league he participates in.



praying for a smooth beginning to the year. He's taking a challenging course load with a lot of honors and AP classes.



**Faith performing in a production of "Little Women" using a script adapted by Seminary President Thomas Egger's daughter (July 2021)**

Last, but certainly not least is Faith. She had a great summer with extra time at her grandparents in Bethel, MO and lots of time playing and hanging out with her friends at the Seminary. She had the opportunity to act in an informal production of "Little Women" (see photo at left). Faith started 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Christ Community Lutheran School today (Aug. 18<sup>th</sup>). Like Nathan, this is her first time attending in-person school here in St. Louis and she is also new to CCLS. So, a lot of change for her!

We are so blessed to have so many family and friends who support and pray for us as we follow God's call to ministerial service in the LCMS. So many times, when we are feeling discouraged,

you've been there with a kind word or a bit of encouragement. We could not do this without you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

May God bless you today and every day. Until next time ... peace in Christ.



**Nathan - First Day of Junior Year**



**Faith - First Day of 7th Grade**

# Classroom Corner

## Academic & Field Work Update

As I write this, we're in the midst of a brief break after the Summer Hebrew language intensive before the regular semester begins. Here's a quick update on my upcoming coursework and field work.

**The Torah** – this is a half-semester course taught by Dr. David Adams. This course will introduce me to the context, narrative, interpretation, and theology of the Torah, focusing on the Book of Exodus as the foundation for the Old Testament revelation of both who God is and of His redemptive and covenantal purposes.

**The Prophets** – this is another half-semester course taught by Dr. Phil Penhallegon. Here we focus on the poetry and theology of the prophets as they critique their status quo and announce the coming new age that the God of Israel will bring about. The course focuses on the book of Isaiah, although others prophetic books are included as well.

**Systematics I** – this course presents and discusses Christian teaching of and theological reflection on God, creation, anthropology, soteriology, the Word, and eschatology. It also explores ways of faithfully and consistently articulating and embodying this theology in the church and for the world. The course gives special attention to contemporary questions, problems, challenges, and opportunities relative to these doctrines and the church's life in contemporary society. This course will be taught by Dr. Leopoldo Sanchez.

**Teaching the Faith** – this course explores the role of the pastor in the discipleship process within a congregational setting as a teacher, resource, and guide. I'll be examining learning theories and teaching methods as they apply to discipleship and catechesis, especially teaching adult Bible

study and confirmation classes. This class will be led by Dr. Abjar Bahkou.

**Worship and the Word** – this is an introduction to the worship of the church as the primary context for formation as disciples of Christ Jesus through the proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Sacraments. It will help me to better understand the pastor's role in presiding and preaching in, planning, and assessing Lutheran worship forms and practices. The instructor for this course will either be Dr. Kent Burreson or Dr. Jon Vieker.

**Greek and Hebrew Labs** – I will spend two hours a week in Greek and Hebrew language labs to maintain and continue to build my language skills. For Greek, I will be studying with Devin Murphy; for Hebrew, I will continue studying with Dr. Phil Penhallegon

**Formation Group** – once a week, I meet in a small group “Winkel” with other second year seminarians. This group covers various topics but also is there for support and prayer. We are mentored by President Emeritus, Dr. Dale Meyer.

**Field Work** – beginning this week, I will begin my new assignment at Zion Lutheran Church in Maryland Heights, MO (west side of St. Louis). I'm looking forward to learning from Rev. Mark Femmel and serving God's people there. I will also be serving at Lutheran Senior Services Hospice during the Fall semester.

*Note: As you can imagine, I'm passionate about Scripture. One of the things that I love to do—especially with the narrative sections of Scripture—is to approach the text at the level of the imagination. What were the sights, sounds, and smells? Is there anything in the story that I can identify with or relate to? Occasionally, I'll write a “retelling” of a story with some devotional thoughts at the end. These types of narratives don't often lend themselves to sermons or Bible classes, so I thought I'd share one in this letter. I wrote this particular one in May. I suppose this story was on my mind because of a class I was taking at the time that was considering Jesus' encounters with ritual impurity and death in the Gospels. If nothing else, perhaps this inspires you to begin (or continue) encountering the Scripture with your imagination and creativity engaged. After all, we are beloved children of an imaginative and creative Heavenly Father.*

---

## “The Healing Touch of the Holy One of God: Reflections on Mark 5:25-34”

by Aaron Levenhagen

In the dim light of the predawn morning, a woman kneels to pray, whispering the words Psalm 30:

*“I cried out to You, O Adonai.  
I begged for mercy, saying,  
‘What will You gain if I die,  
if I sink into the grave?’  
Can my dust praise You?  
Can it tell of Your faithfulness?  
Hear me, Adonai, and have mercy on me.  
Help me, O Adonai.”*

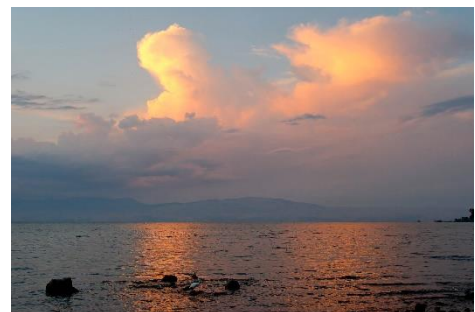
*(Psalm 30:8-10, NLT)*

Wet tears shone on the woman's pale cheeks as she prayed. She tired. So very tired. Tired of the sickness and suffering. Tired of the doctors. Tired of the stigma. Tired of the shame. Tired of feeling cursed by God. Tired of begging for mercy ... for help that never comes. Tired of praying ... and yet she still prays.

*“For His anger lasts only a moment,  
but His favor lasts a lifetime!  
Weeping may last through the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.”*

*(Psalm 30:5, NLT)*

The words choke in her throat. God's anger toward her has lasted for much more than a moment. She *has* prayed. She *has* pleaded. But for twelve agonizing years God has been silent. Drawing the back of her hand across her face, she dries the tears. From under the tree where she sits, she sees the faint orange glow of the sunrise beginning to cast light on the humble buildings of Kfar



Sunrise over the Sea of Galilee  
*(Photo credit: Pictorial Library of Bible Lands)*



Nahum<sup>1</sup> and to reflect off the waters of the nearby Sea of Galilee. But there's nothing beautiful for her this morning. Weeping has lasted through the night. But there is no joy to be found today. How could there be?

She has lived with bleeding for twelve humiliating years. She has been labeled unclean by the rabbis and subjected to the Levitical prohibitions. Unable to touch others or to be touched. Unable to enter Jerusalem for the festivals or the Temple for worship or to offer a sacrifice for her sins. Unable even to simply join the Sabbath service in the synagogue. Her very presence is viewed as unworthy, unholy, unclean, and defiling by all of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Ostracized and orphaned by society. Ignored. Avoided. Forgotten by God.

For years she has trudged from doctor to doctor, trying to find a place to lay her burden down. The doctors filled her mind with hopes and her body with folk remedies, but in the end the only thing they relieved her of was her money. Every penny that she had. She is destitute now. And only now, when she's out of money, have the doctors finally admitted that there is nothing they can do for her.

Her life is ebbing away. The steady loss of blood over the years has taken its toll. She is anemic, pale, and weak. Every illusion she had about life has been shattered. Suffering has a way of doing that. And swept away with those illusions are her dreams. She no longer dreams of marriage and a family ... of combing the hair of a daughter or wiping the dirty face of a son ... of bouncing a grandbaby on her knee ... of being cared for in her old age by loved ones ... of happy memories. All of those dreams have been swept into broken piles by her suffering.



View of the Sea of Galilee from the Northwest  
(Photo credit: Pictorial Library of Bible Lands)

As the village begins to come to life for the new day, she hears excited voices. Yeshua,<sup>3</sup> the healer has come back to town. His boat has just arrived down at the shore, they say. A crowd is gathering ... including many diseased and disabled people who were hoping for just a few seconds of His attention.

The Healer. She has seen Him walk the streets before from a distance. She has overheard people talking about this Yeshua ... unbelievable things. They say He cures the incurables: the demon-possessed ... lepers. Untouchables like her. She wonders ... hesitates ... and then holding onto

that thin thread of desperate faith, she heads toward the sound of the crowd.

The crowd has already gathered around Yeshua. Pressing ... pushing ... elbowing ... and jostling. Voices calling His name. His disciples try to form a circle around their Master to push back against the crush of

---

<sup>1</sup> *Kfar Nahum* is the Hebrew name the village we have come to know in English as *Capernaum*. A rough translation is "village of comfort."

<sup>2</sup> See Leviticus 15:25-33.

<sup>3</sup> *Yeshua* or *Y'shua* was a common Hebrew name among Jews of the Second Temple period. The name corresponds to the Greek spelling *Iesous*, from which, through the Latin *IESVS/Iesus*, comes the English spelling *Jesus*. The name literally means *salvation*!

the crowd. How will she ever get close enough? If she—the unclean one—touches anyone she could be punished!

As Jesus inches His way toward the town, a familiar, authoritative voice shouts, and the crowd parts. She recognizes the voice. It is Ya'ir,<sup>4</sup> the local synagogue elder. Had he spotted her? After all, one of his tasks as an elder of the local synagogue was to ensure that unclean individuals like her didn't enter the synagogue and defile others. Was he going to point her out to Yeshua? She waits in fear.

Instead, the mob falls silent as Ya'ir sinks to his knees and drops his face to the dust of the street. "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." Yeshua reaches down, lifts Ya'ir to his feet, and after reassuring him, begins to follow him.

During this brief exchange, the woman had crept to the edge of the crowd. And now she begins to panic! If they see her, she will be shunned and forced away from Yeshua. She might never have the chance to reach Him again! She thought, "If I touch even His garments, I will be made well." She decides to seize her only opportunity. Weak from the loss of blood, she crawls forward, and desperately pushes her empty hand through a broken seam in the crowd. As she stretches out her hand, Yeshua moves and the crush of the crowd closes around Him again, but a last, desperate lunge allow her fingers to just barely touch the fringes of His robe.



**"If I touch even His garments, I will be made well..."**

And that's when she felt it. A tingling rush of vitality. A warm glow from the center of her body that radiated to each limb. In the flood of those feelings, she releases her grasp and is swept away by the crowd. Healed at last! Kneeling there on the ground, she knew it.

Yeshua felt the surge of healing power too. He immediately stops walking, and turns and asks, "Who touched My garments?" His disciples looked at one another ... then their Master. "Rabbi, You must be joking! With all of these people, pushing and grabbing, who *hasn't* touched you?" But He is unwilling to let it go; He wants to talk with the mystery beneficiary of His power.

A sudden jolt of terror swept through her. She had broken the Torah by touching Him. And not just touching Him, touching the *tzitzit* ... the *tassels*, the *fringe* of His garment, a tangible symbol of obedience

---

<sup>4</sup> Ya'ir is the Hebrew name which we have come to know in English as *Jairus*.

to the Torah, the symbol of a good Jew's ritual purity and pursuit of holiness. She had made Him impure ... unclean, by touching the symbol of His purity.<sup>5</sup> What would they do to her?

Yeshua remained stone-still, peering through the cluster of legs and saw the trembling figure on the ground. One by one, each person moved out of His line of sight and followed His gaze until no one stood between them. The crowd murmurs and gasps when they see her. *What is she doing here? How will Jesus react to being touched by the outcast?* But slowly, she comes. Terrified and embarrassed, she comes. Her words broken into fragments by her tears, she tells Yeshua everything. Tells Him the story He already knows, of a nightmare of twelve years. How she somehow knew beyond any doubt that one touch from Him would make her whole.

And now she waits for the inevitable condemnation.

She raises her head to meet His eyes and finds His expression filled with gentleness and compassion. Face-to-face, Healer and healed. And with the tender word, "Daughter," Yeshua gives this outcast a new home and a new identity within the family of God. He gives her healing. He gives her back her dreams. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your disease."

---

What a story! This beautiful encounter is sandwiched in between stories of Jesus casting a *legion* of demons out a man, and the raising of Jairus' daughter. In each case, Jesus, the Holy One of God, encounters unholiness and uncleanness—the outward expression of sin and death. He opposes these forces of uncleanness, sickness, and death and destroys the source of these impurities by His own holiness and power. We find that it is impossible for Him to be contaminated by the filth of our sin, sickness, and death. Rather He comes, bringing with Him the Kingdom of God and announces that, in every way, a new and glorious age has come. An age where the grip of sin and the impurity and unworthiness that separate us from God are being actively reversed. An age where faith in Jesus is the key to entering into and being under the rule and reign of God. An age where holiness overpowers impurity; healing overpowers sickness; and abundant life overpowers the forces of death. The kingdom of God breaks in through the holy and healing touch of Christ.

The brief sentence that Jesus speaks to this woman says so much more than what appears on the surface. Only here in the Gospels, does Jesus refer to a woman as "Daughter." In a time when so many overly religious men avoided touching, speaking to, or even looking at a woman, Jesus will not permit this suffering woman to be overlooked. In the original language, He vividly describes her disease using a word (Greek: *μάστιγος*) that means "suffering, torment, whipping, flogging, or scourging." Her suffering and torment are known to Him, and He wants her to feel His compassion. As God's creation, she deserved attention and respect. And to her alone, does Jesus use the loving, familial word, "Daughter." And when Jesus says, "Your faith has made you *well*," our English translation doesn't quite give the full sense of the word. In fact, the word, (Greek: *σώζω*) we have translated as *well* really means "salvation" or "to save." *And it is in the perfect tense, meaning that something "is saved and will continue to be saved."* *Daughter, your faith has saved you and will continue to save you; go in peace and be healed of your torment.*

---

<sup>5</sup> See Numbers 15:38-39 and Deuteronomy 22:12.



Twelve years. Imagine that! Twelve years of seemingly unanswered prayer and no change. Sometimes we are tempted to give up on people or situations that have not changed for years. Don't turn away from the One who can help you. God can change what seems unchangeable, giving new purpose and hope. Jesus Christ can make a difference when it seems too late for anyone else to help. He can bring healing to broken relationships, deliverance from addicting habits, and forgiveness to emotional scars.

So, what about us? What secret pain or infirmity do we bear today? The loss of a loved one? The loss of a job? The forgiveness you so long to receive but have been denied? The depression or anxiety that holds you in its grip? The longing for a spouse? The breakup of a marriage? The longing for a child? The slow fading of a parent's memory? The pain and disappointment of a wayward child? The doubts you feel in the middle of the night? The recurring sin that you just can't get control of? The broken relationships in your family? The rejection of a close friend? The loneliness and isolation of the pandemic? The illness for which healing hasn't come? The fear of the future?

This week, will we stay at the fringes of the crowd, comfortable in the hustle and bustle of religious activity? Will we repeat the liturgy and sing the hymns with folded, complacent arms? Or will we truly enjoy the closeness of His presence and stretch out our arms in longing for the Lord Jesus Christ? Will we sit satiated and satisfied? Or will we, like the woman in this story, come hungry and desperate for the nourishment of His Holy Word and His body and blood? Will we stay back in the shadows in fear? Or will we grope for the fringe of His garment with nothing to offer but the faith God so graciously grants so that we might be made whole? Jesus Christ will continually bring His holy, pure gifts, and invade our impurity, sinfulness, and pain with His tenderness, forgiveness, and hope. God is ever faithful in His grace and love for us. In Jesus there is both hope and promise.

I began my retelling of this story by imagining this pale, weak, exhausted woman praying the words of Psalm 30. I can't help but imagine her praying again following her encounter with Jesus. Maybe, just maybe, for the first time she was able to pray from her heart the conclusion to that psalm:

*"You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.  
You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,  
that I might sing praises to You and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever!"* (Psalm 30:11-12, NLT)

Mourning and dancing are replaced by joyful dancing. The sackcloth of grief is replaced with the silken robes of a child of the King. The King who defeats sin, sickness, and even death. Our faithful God. And we cannot be silent. We give Him thanks. Every morning. Every day. Today and until the day dawns and heaven's morning breaks. And then for all eternity.