The Keystone Connection

A Message to the Conference

August 25, 2026

Members and Friends of Keystone Conference,

"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels…" Matthew 16:27a

Most of us can agree that the beauty of reading and studying scripture is that depending on your life's context at the time you read a passage, new thoughts are engaged or things that were always there are more prominent. That is what happened when I read this coming Sunday's lectionary passage from Matthew 16:21-28.

For the first time, I noticed the angels. There is the verse where angels are named directly by Jesus as accompanying the Son of Man to "repay everyone for what has been done." 16:27b. Umm…yikes! But earlier in the passage and more prominent is the angel and accuser, Satan, which Jesus commands to get behind him when Peter objects to Jesus' prediction of his own suffering, death, and raising. I never made the connection between angels being mentioned twice in this short passage. Neither mention is a positive ad campaign for any goodness there may be in angels.

I encourage you, when you have some time, to do a fun little dive on angels and "angelological development" in our bible. Avoid the internet for this search and instead grab a trusted bible dictionary or commentary. It is a fascinating and sometimes wild ride. Most people like to think of angels as messengers of "good news for all people" or advocates for us choosing good over evil as they sit on our shoulder and guide us. The first idea is biblical, the second not-so-much. And then there are the named angels such as Michael (who does not smell like cookies), Satan, and Gabriel. Like I said, fascinating.



The reason this passage's angels leapt off the page at me this time is because recently I moved from a shelf in my office to my desk a photo I took in the cathedral of Halberstadt, Germany, in 2010 (pictured). This small sculpture of an angel has a broken wing tip. My friend, who gave me the tour and who worked at a museum connected to the cathedral, pointed out this angel and said it had become somewhat popular because of its brokenness. People were being drawn to its imperfection.

That is why I'm drawn to it at this time in my life when brokenness is more prominent and healing slower. I'm drawn to the notion of an angel who is imperfect, striving to be a messenger of divine good news but on some days must rest because of aching wings and looks on the brokenness of others with solidarity. It isn't crucified or bringing judgement. But it rests in the comfort of knowing that tomorrow the sunlight may come through the windows at a different angle and shine on its face instead of its broken wing.

Rev. Dwight Hein
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2027 Clergy Compensation Guidelines have been updated. Learn more by visiting keystoneucc.org/resources/compensation-guidelines/

The only change of note from 2026 in the guidelines is at the bottom of page two where the 2027 Cost of Living Adjustment is listed. For clergy in existing calls, the recommendation is an increase to salary and related benefits of 3-3.5%.

Early next year, we anticipate revisiting the guidelines. Clergy and lay leaders will be surveyed to find out if this model is working and how the Conference Compensation Guidelines can best serve as a helpful resource for both churches and clergy.

"Where Teens Find Their Stories": Seminars on Youth Culture

Our young people are spending more time in online worlds than ever before, and those spaces are shaping how they think about identity, belonging, relationships, and even faith. This fall, we're offering three seminars to help clergy and youth leaders understand the digital cultures influencing the teens we serve.

We'll take a closer look at the virtual spaces young people gather, such as, fandom communities. We will also dive into the mission, ethics, and identity of influencer spaces like the manosphere and trad wives. We'll discuss why these spaces matter, how they're impacting our youth, and what role the church has in these conversations.

The sessions are designed to be practical, honest, and accessible. You don't need to be tech-savvy or "in the know" to benefit. You just need a heart for young people and a willingness to learn.

More details and registration information will be shared soon. We hope you'll join us for these important conversations.