



THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

VOL.128 NO.1 JANUARY 2009



On Being *Lutheran* Today



9

A HISTORIC HERITAGE
A DISTINCTIVE VOICE

11

OUR
CONFESSIONS

13

EVERY PICTURE TELLS
A (LUTHERAN) STORY



Providing Missouri Synod laypeople with stories and information that complement congregational life, foster personal growth in faith, and help interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective.

FEATURES

6 ON BEING LUTHERAN IN 2009 by Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

Within the Christian community, Lutherans are unique—peculiar—in the best sense of that word.

9 A HISTORIC HERITAGE A DISTINCTIVE VOICE by Jim Gimbel

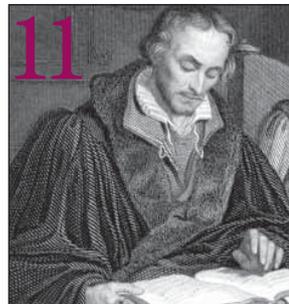
Lutherans rejoice in being a ‘peculiar’ people, with a distinctive interpretation of Scripture that we use in bold mission to serve Christ.

11 WHAT ARE THOSE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS ANYWAY? by Herbert C. Mueller Jr.

More than historic relics, our confessions identify who we are as Lutherans, connect us to the Church of all ages and, most of all, keep the Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners at the heart of our life and proclamation.

13 EVERY PICTURE TELLS A (LUTHERAN) STORY by Kim Plummer Krull

When you picture “a Lutheran,” whom do you see?



TO THE READER

Peculiar. Today, when we use that word in conversation, our implication is often pejorative. But as Dr. Lawrence Rast Jr. points out in our cover story, there is an older tradition regarding the use of *peculiar*, too, a sense that means special, unique, and yes, different in a good way. It is in that sense, and in the context of

today’s 24/7, ever-changing and increasingly secular world that Rast (and fellow author Jim Gimbel as well) reminds us that we as Lutherans have special—yes, peculiar—insights to offer and a marvelous story to tell, a story centered on Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

In the best sense of the word, we

hope you find this a “peculiar” issue, including our New Year’s photo album, which highlights some of your fellow LCMS neighbors from around the country.

James H. Heine
Managing Editor
The Lutheran Witness

DEPARTMENTS

3 LIFELINE
4 LETTERS
23 NOTICES

28 SEARCHING SCRIPTURE
29 FROM THE PRESIDENT

COMING NEXT MONTH

- Hope Behind the Wall
- The Largest Lutheran University in the World
- The Witness of Matthew Jordan

Pounds of LOVE

One of the big things we hear at Christmas is how much weight we are all putting on. We don't eat right, and we eat too much, from the middle of November to the first week of January.

In January, we seem to hear about nothing but losing weight. OK, we hear about *trying* to lose weight.

I believe weight is like matter; it can be neither created nor destroyed. There is the same amount of weight in the world now as there always was. It just keeps getting redistributed.

When someone loses it, others gain it. In this matter of weight, I happen to consider myself someone who always takes one for the team. I take the weight other people are losing. Much like being a table-mover, it is something I can do to help out.

By now you may have surmised that I am a big guy and need a way to justify my size without having to exercise and diet. For me, diet is a holy word. I try not to say it without really doing it. Some people say it is just *die* with a "t" on it. I joke that it is "dying" with a cross, because for me, *diet* is much like being crucified, it hurts. (I know it's not really like being crucified, but you get the idea.)

Our sin is also a terrible weight for us. It weighs us down.

It destroys our body, and it destroys our relationship with God. Unlike pounds, though, we can't get rid of sin by diet or exercise.

In fact, we can't do anything to get rid of it. Jesus' saving work on the cross is the only way we are freed from its eternal consequences, from its weight on us. He covers it up with His clean cloak of perfection, and then God doesn't look at our sin; He looks at His Son's sacrifice for us.

Kind of like our spouse, who knows we are big and wants us to get thinner but loves us and looks past all that.

Just like too much weight for too long can cause fatal health problems, so sin kills also. If we didn't get rid of our sin we would die, and what a terrible death it would be: permanent and eternal separation from God. God, though, can change the rules. Just as He created matter and the laws of physics but doesn't have to obey them, so also His love is not a thing of only so much. No, His love is constantly being offered and given to us. He shows us His love in the Babe of Bethlehem, in Christ's life lived for us here on earth, and in His death for us on the cross.

Christ is our eternal weight-loss plan when it comes to sin. It is cheaper than Jenny Craig, more permanent than surgery, and easier than working out. The only thing we have to do is believe and repent, which God empowers us to do if we let Him.

My New Year's resolution is to lose weight, the weight of my sin by letting the Holy Spirit work His way in me, by letting Him bring me closer to the one thing that can help me lose the weight of my sin, Jesus Christ, my Savior.

**When it comes to sin,
Christ is our eternal
weight-loss plan.**

Mark Einspahr is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church
in Gardnerville, Nev., where he is an elder.

A moment of joy

It was a great joy to read “Through the Ages” in the November *Lutheran Witness*. The wonderful centenarian told her pastor something I had learned as a child and my parents before me had also learned. I belong to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in the little town of Strasburg, Ill. Grace Church had a young pastor named Rev. Arthur Bonnet in 1909 until his early death in 1917. He taught his congregation that you should say “the holy Christian church, the communion of saints” together, because they are the same thing. It is a legacy that this young pastor left to our congregation, and we still say it that same way. We have been blessed by our pastor today, who believes and teaches the same as Pastor Bonnet did.

*Donna Michael
Stewardson, Ill.*

I especially enjoyed your recent article on the lessons we can learn from cats. Our dear cat, Tigger, died recently. Her death taught me to give TLC today and not tomorrow.

*Augusta R. Mennell
Campus Ministry Director
All Saints Lutheran Church and
Student Center
Slippery Rock, Pa.*

I read with considerable interest “Life Lessons from a Cat.” Of course, dogs are great teachers, too. So relates Martin Luther in *Table Talk*. The Reformer writes of his puppy, Tölpel, who sat by the table, looking with open mouth and motionless eyes for a morsel from his master. Luther comments, “Oh, if I could only pray the way this dog watches the meat. All his thoughts are concentrated on the piece of meat.

innocent. But quite to the contrary, performing a surgical abortion in nearly every instance absolutely represents the willful, purposeful intent of one or more persons to cause the death of a person living but not yet born; a person who has been accused of no offense under law and who has been denied access to the protections of legal due process upon which our criminal justice system otherwise sets great store.

Hunger, poverty, and homelessness are treatable conditions, amenable to relief, correction, and elimination. My own associations with pro-life activists over a span of nearly four decades informs me that as a group they need take second place to no one in their voluntary efforts to offer succor, to help relieve these distressful but remediable conditions.

But death is permanent, not reversible through humane acts of charity. And the blood of tens of millions of aborted children cries out for justice. May God have mercy on us, for we have denied it to these most helpless of our kind.

*Leonard C. Johnson
Moscow, Idaho*



It was a great joy to read “Through the Ages” in the November *Lutheran Witness*. The wonderful centenarian told her pastor something I had learned as a child and my parents before me had also learned.

*Donna Michael
Stewardson, Ill.*

Read more letters to the editor at LCMS.org/Witness. We welcome letters that comment on articles in *The Lutheran Witness*. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Send letters to “Letters,” c/o *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or you may send letters via e-mail to Lutheran.Witness@LCMS.org. Please include your name, postal address, and telephone number. Letters without this information cannot be considered for publication.

Empty calories

I am reading my November issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, and what do my wondering eyes behold but a—what? A metaphorical homily-like piece about a cat? I have no quarrel at all with Rev. Genzen, and nothing he writes is doctrinally suspect. I also realize that the *Lifeline* article is often a personal reflection. However, the feline fantasy nature of the piece trivializes the theology. I readily acknowledge that we don’t have to have meat for every meal, but by the same token, the empty calories this story offers up are a little embarrassing. Is this really what we want in our church publication?

*Elaine E. Gavin
Naperville, Ill.*

Otherwise he has no thought, wish or hope” (*Luther’s Works*, 54:37–38).

*Dr. George Hanson
Faith Lutheran Church
Kingston, Wash.*

Trivializing abortion

Robert Droege (“Letters,” November 2008) quite rightly reminds us of our duty to offer aid to people troubled by hunger, poverty, homelessness, and the like. But to set abortion on moral par with these incidental adjuncts to human existence is to trivialize it.

Apart from especially oppressive governments, no one sets out willfully to inflict these kinds of troubles on the

About the Cover:

Our cover features some of the LCMS members highlighted in our “photo album” that begins on page 13. **Top row, from left: Sharon Hinck**, St. Michael Lutheran Church, Bloomington, Minn.; **Ellie and Ken Chitwood**, Hosanna Lutheran Church, Mesa, Ariz., and Trinity Lutheran Church, Simi Valley, Calif.; **Rev. Paul A. O. Boecler**, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids,

Mich.; **Mary Alexander**, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Ocala, Fla.

Row 2: Rep. John Shimkus, Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Collinsville, Ill.; **Bethany Price**, Grace Lutheran Church, Eugene, Ore.; **Lorraine Rosso and Al Weatherly**, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Macomb, Mich.; **Linda Davis**, Messiah Lutheran Church, Plano, Texas; **George Kottwitz**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Edwardsville, Ill. **Row 3: Dr. Leo S. Mackay**, Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Va.; **Carol Kallina**, Hope Lutheran Church, Orlando, Fla.; **Taylor Cambridge and Anna Nebelsick**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Glenwood, Iowa; **Suzan Reeve**, Trinity Lutheran Church, Glenwood, Iowa. **Row 4: Logan Dee Harkey and Lance Graf**, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Vernon, Texas; **Kyle Sorkness**, Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Fergus Falls, Minn.; **Queyah Clarke**, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Kansas City, Mo.; **Melissa Salomón**, Concordia Lutheran Church, Chula Vista, Calif.



Official periodical of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through the Board for Communication Services, Dennis A. Clauss, chairman; David L. Strand, executive director.

Staff: David L. Strand, interim executive editor; James H. Heine, managing editor; Vicky Schaeffer, senior designer; Robert Sexton, marketing manager and advertising sales; Jim Stange, production coordinator; Carla Dubbelde, editorial manager, district editions; Karen Higgins, editorial assistant; editorial office: 1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; (314) 996-1202, Ext. 1228.

© 2009 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Reproduction of a single article or column for parish use only does not require permission of THE LUTHERAN WITNESS. Such reproductions, however, should credit THE LUTHERAN WITNESS as the source. Cover images are not reproducible without permission. Also, photos credited to sources outside the LCMS are not to be copied.

Published 11 times per year by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. Individual subscription \$22.00 per year. Organized congregation subscriptions and district editions offered at reduced rate if submitted through local churches.

To subscribe, renew, or to give a gift subscription, call Concordia Publishing House at 1-800-325-3381.

For subscription information or address changes, e-mail: cphorder@cph.org

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
1-888-THE LCMS (843-5267) www.lcms.org
e-mail: LUTHERAN.WITNESS@lcms.org

Member: Associated Church Press
Evangelical Press Association
January 2009 (ISSN: 0024-757X) Vol. 128, No. 1



On Being *Lutheran* in 2009



As a child, when I heard my parents speak of a friend or relative as “peculiar,” it didn’t take me long to conclude that they thought the person was a bit odd. And so it was difficult for me to make sense of a Bible passage read in church from time to time: 1 Peter 2:9. In the old King James Version, that passage reads as follows: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a *peculiar people*; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him

who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (emphasis added).

My good Christian mother explained the meaning of the word. “Peculiar can mean special, unique, and different. And all of these are good things.” This interesting little word has stuck with me over the years, and I appreciate more than ever its distinctive meaning. Christians *are* different. And within the larger Christian community, Lutherans *are* unique—*peculiar*—in the best sense of that word.

‘The *Times* They Are A-Changin’

On election night, president-elect Barack Obama stated, “Change has come to America.” Certainly America is always changing, but the recent election and imminent inauguration of the first African-American president of the United States underscores the changes we all experience every day. As a friend of mine put it when we were in college: “The only thing constant in my life is change.”

Change has always been a part of the human experience. No two human beings ever experienced change more profoundly and more devastatingly than Adam and Eve when they fell into sin. At the time of Constantine, the Church moved quickly from being an illegal religion to the religion of the state—now that is a paradigm shift! Even our own Missouri Synod, formed in 1847, has gone from being *Die Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andern Staaten* (“The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States”) to, since 1947, the more familiar Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

At the same time, however, there is a peculiar character to our experience of change today—the rapidity with which we experience it. Even given the technological advances of the last 100 years, few things compare with the power of the Internet in

the present. True, news could be transmitted immediately over long distances via telegraph, radio, and even TV. But in each case the technology required an expert individual or staff to control the dissemination of information. Today, everyone can be that expert with little investment and only modest training. Web sites, e-mail, blogs, YouTube™, and other technologies make more information available to us with such immediacy that it is impossible for us to gather it all in.

But if we can’t gather it all in, can we at least make some sense of it? I think we can. And that is where our peculiar status as Lutherans can be of great help to us in the present and future!

What’s in a *Name*?

Where do we find Lutheranism in all this? Is it just one more piece of information in an already oversaturated culture?

There are approximately 66 million Lutherans in the world today. The Lutheran World Federation reports that the total number of Lutherans in North America in 2007 was approximately 7.94 million, while our own Synod notes there are 21 distinct North American Lutheran church bodies. Out of the North American total, some 2.38 million are members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The strength of the Lutheran tradition in America has its roots in its incredible growth beginning in the second half of the 19th century and continuing to about 1970. Since that time the picture has changed, with a slight annual decline characterizing Lutheranism for more than three decades now.

Bowling *Alone*

Many of us have noticed this decline. And it shows itself both in church bodies and local congregations. Robert Putnam’s landmark study, *Bowling Alone*, shows how Americans have become increasingly disconnected from their family, their friends, and, yes, their churches. For example, over the last 25 years there has been a 35 percent drop in having friends over, a 43 percent drop in having family dinners, and a 58 percent drop in club meetings. It’s no wonder we see changes in our Synod and its congregations.

What’s the problem? Some would say that in our postmodern times the old Christian message has lost its “punch”—it is simply one version of truth among many. That is borne out by the recent Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report on religion in the United States, which showed that while 78 percent



by Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

‘Peculiar can mean special, unique, and different. And all of these are good things.’

of Americans think of themselves as Christians, 66 percent of Protestants (from across the spectrum of denominations) believe that many religions can lead to eternal life. “Truth is tribal,” the saying goes. In contrast, we believe that we confess the one, biblical faith, and it is universally true. That claim strikes many as peculiar in these postmodern times.

The *Theology* of the Cross

Yet the Christian confession is that Jesus Christ is “the Way, and the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6 ESV), and that He is the “same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). In this basic Christian witness, we Lutherans have a peculiar gift. At the beginning of the Reformation, Luther made an important distinction between a “theology of glory” (which was humanly oriented) and a “theology of the cross.” This theology of the cross was centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ for us. Luther affirmed the biblical, historic faith that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to bear human sin, suffer, die, and rise again. Christ is true God and true man who came into the world to pay for humankind’s sin, that is, to win salvation for us. This salvation Christ gives to us freely—by grace, we say—is God’s undeserved gift. It is given to us through the Word and the Sacraments. It’s all about Christ for us, for in Christ we see the very nature of God. “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Gifted to Be Gifts in This World

Theologians like to make the distinction between “the faith” that we believe (*fides quae creditor*—the things Scripture teaches that we believe) and the gift of faith in Jesus Christ (*fides qua creditor*—personal faith that clings to Christ). To the first point, we Missouri Synod Lutherans subscribe unconditionally to the Lutheran Confessions as gathered in the Book of Concord of 1580 because it is a faithful exposition of the Scriptures. To the second point, the Lutheran Confessions affirm that faith itself is God’s gift. It is not my personal accomplishment. I do not have faith in my faith. Rather, the object of faith, Jesus Christ, is the One who creates and sustains faith in us through the Holy Spirit actively working through the Word and the Sacraments.

It is on this point that we Lutherans have a peculiar opportunity, particularly here in present-day America. In our post-modern times, where more and more people find themselves

isolated and without community, we have the ultimate, eternal community. We are God’s own people, called out of darkness into His marvelous light. We have a story to tell—and that story proclaims that in Christ God has reconciled the world to Himself! (Rom. 5:8–10).

The Lutheran *Difference*

A number of years ago historian Mark Noll wondered about the “newsworthy potential” of Lutheranism. Despite its lack of glamour, however, Noll argued that the Lutheran tradition had something significant to offer America.

Lutherans do have much to offer to the wider American community, but only if they can fulfill two conditions. First, to contribute as Lutherans in America, Lutherans must remain authentically Lutheran. Second, to contribute as Lutherans in America, Lutherans must also find out how to speak Lutheranism with an American accent. . . . Lutherans are heirs to a better way. They possess confessions that have stood the test of time, that arise from the major themes of Scripture, that present a cohesive picture of the Christian’s relationship to God, to fellow humans, and to the world.

What makes Lutherans peculiar? Certainly we confess with the Church of all time the basic truths of the Scriptures. We hold to the Christian faith as revealed in God’s inerrant Word, confess that faith with the historic Church, and seek to practice that faith faithfully in the present time. In other words, we are biblically based, historically consistent, and contemporary in application. In all of this, Jesus Christ is the center. He is the One who entered the world to carry human sin to the cross and to pay for it once for all. He is the One who rose victoriously from the grave to open heaven to you and to me. Now our Lord, who has given us the gift of faith, strengthens us through Word and Sacrament to be who we are—a *peculiar people*, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

2009 is a great time to be Lutheran!

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. is academic dean and professor of historical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Living as a Lutheran Today

Receive God's gifts! In the Divine Service God pours His grace and mercy out on us in abundance through His Word and Sacraments and strengthens us for a life of service to Him and our neighbor. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Study the Word! People today wish they could hear the voice of God. He speaks powerfully through His Word to contemporary circumstances. So keep "examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things [are] so" (Acts 17:11b).

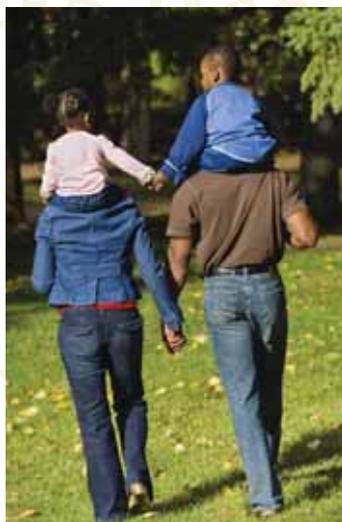
Know your doctrine! Refamiliarize yourself with the Small Catechism. It is a rich resource for speaking the truths of the faith in a simple way and will help give you confidence to speak about your faith. Dig into the Lutheran Confessions, too. "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you" (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

Tell your story! One of the great joys of being a historian is that people share with me the stories of God's work in their lives. But these need not be spectacular stories in order to be profound. Simple testimony to God's faithfulness to His promises as He has worked through parents, teachers, and friends in your life can be powerful means through which God's Spirit works. "For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Rom. 10:10).

Share your faith! Look for opportunities to share the faith, as well as your personal faith. Sharing stories of God's work in your life can build deep and lasting relationships with people who need to hear of God's love for them in Christ. "But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). — *Lawrence Rast Jr.*

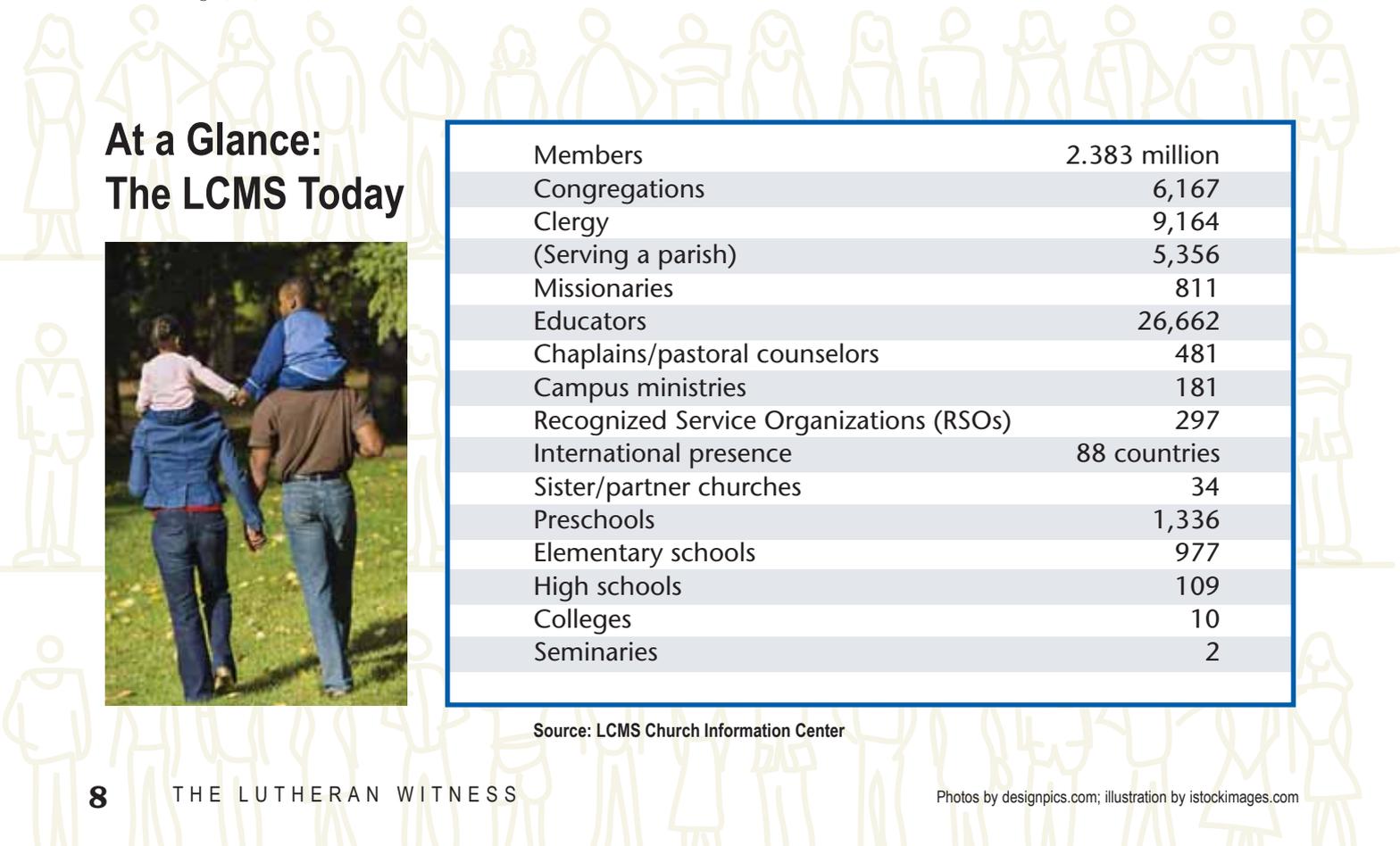


At a Glance: The LCMS Today



Members	2.383 million
Congregations	6,167
Clergy	9,164
(Serving a parish)	5,356
Missionaries	811
Educators	26,662
Chaplains/pastoral counselors	481
Campus ministries	181
Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs)	297
International presence	88 countries
Sister/partner churches	34
Preschools	1,336
Elementary schools	977
High schools	109
Colleges	10
Seminaries	2

Source: LCMS Church Information Center



A Historic Heritage

A Distinctive Voice



Lutherans rejoice in being a 'peculiar' people, with a distinctive interpretation of Scripture that is used in a bold mission to serve Christ.



This means that Lutherans celebrate:

The peculiarity of the Word. Lutherans believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Faith in Christ as the heart and center of the Bible and key to its true meaning leads to trust that the rest of the Bible is the true (“God-breathed”) word of God. While the rest of the world has no authorized source of truth, we proclaim Christ, and the Word—Holy Scripture—testifies to His truth.

The peculiarity of the liturgy. Lutherans hold to a historic, biblical, theologically arranged sequence and language in the liturgy. It offers a literal proclamation of God’s truth, and its pattern speaks significant truths to this world.

The peculiarity of the Sacraments. Lutherans rejoice in the real power of Baptism and celebrate it daily. LCMS Lutherans recognize Jesus Himself—His true body and blood—in the Lord’s Supper and celebrate how that “vertical” relationship with God unites us horizontally also in the body of Christ.

The peculiarity of Lutheran education. LCMS Lutherans are historically committed to the premise of Lutheran parochial schools rather than simply to generic private schools that follow a Bible-school model. Lutherans are committed to ministries that actively interact with God’s Word in Sunday School, confirmation class, VBS, and adult-education opportunities. Even when public education is sound, a Lutheran education offers a unique—a *peculiar*—advantage over and above the basics.

The peculiarity of social ministry. LCMS Lutherans actively reach out to “the least of these,” but also accompany such ministries for one’s neighbor’s welfare with eternal food for the soul.

The Nov. 24, 2008, issue of *Newsweek* featured “Obama’s Lincoln” as its cover story. Abraham Lincoln, our 16th president, frequently referred to Christian thought in unmistakable but non-sectarian ways. President-elect Obama appears to be modeling his leadership style on Lincoln’s pattern.

But this is not simply a resurgence of a 150-year-old principle. William Howard Taft, our 27th president, inaugurated in March 1909, concluded his inaugural address by saying: “I invoke the considerate sympathy and support of my fellow-citizens and the aid of the Almighty God in the discharge of my responsible duties.” In 1967, sociologist Robert N. Bellah, in an article entitled “Civil Religion in America,” referred to three instances where John F. Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural address invoked the name of God, similar to some of the god-talk in the election season just ended.

Bellah’s landmark assessment builds on Rousseau’s concept of civil religion. Bellah observed that nationalism and nationalistic pride had emerged as a national religion of its own. The cycle seems to have a pattern: Nearly every half a century, God is invoked and civil religion promoted.

Today, civil religion prevails. However, civil religion is not the same as Christianity; thus these are indeed peculiar times. Each of the previous cycles were times ripe for the Gospel and the growth of God’s kingdom, as is also the case today.

A New ‘Spirituality’

Most Americans consider themselves religious. However, that religion may be nominally Christian at best, and as Lawrence Rast notes elsewhere in this issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, it often seems increasingly non-Christian and sometimes even anti-church. Perhaps it is best described as a pluralistic blend of personal values constructing a god that is dramatically different from biblical revelation. Mom, apple pie, civil liberties, human rights, global toleration, and ethical relativism prevail in a blend of culture and quasi-spirituality fueled by anyone who has an audience (think Oprah Winfrey). These are peculiar times indeed.

Today—again, as noted already by Dr. Rast—the world needs the “peculiarities” of a Lutheran contribution more than ever. In a day when some seem afraid of being labeled Lutheran, our historic heritage has much to offer. Historic, biblical Lutheranism, as a strand of broader Christianity, speaks with a distinctive voice as it points to Christ. This voice needs unity of confession and belief and a common commitment to sharing these peculiar truths creatively and authentically. It needs to be bold, clear, and unapologetic.



The peculiarity of higher education. LCMS Lutherans have a unique approach to higher education, especially through the Concordia University System, providing quality disciplinary exploration alongside meaningful ministry to post-secondary students in the context of the Gospel, holding to the paradox that allows one to explore the world fully at the same time as faith is nurtured and informed by God's Word.

The peculiarity of being pro-life. LCMS Lutherans celebrate all of life, reaching out to serve those at the very beginning and end of life with support for their personhood, and also offering resources that share the saving Gospel of salvation for their souls.

The peculiarity of mission. LCMS Lutherans are missional in every aspect of life, in families, at the workplace, in the community, among friend and foe, and in cross-cultural contexts here and abroad, so that God's election may reach others. Mission is service to God every day.

The peculiarity of unity. LCMS Lutherans are united in one faith into one spiritual communion called the body of Christ. Unity means sharing a common faith and common set of beliefs, not just an agreement to disagree. Unity means that power is held in check by love for God, service to Christ and His Church, and the commitment to keep the message faithful and share it fully.

A Mission to Serve Christ

These indeed are peculiar times. They may appear to be squeezing Christianity, and especially denominational churches, away from having a relevant voice at the table of secular and civil affairs. As the world rallies around increasingly mainstream and politically correct themes, a peculiar, but accurate, Lutheran truth rings with clarity.

Historically, Lutherans have used "peculiar" ways to creatively and courageously share the Gospel. With Luther, it was the printing press. With Walther, the newspaper. With Walter A. Maier, the radio. With Herman Gockel, Lutheran television. Each was a trend-setting way to share the truths of Lutheranism. Lutherans rejoice in being a peculiar people with a distinctive interpretation of Scripture that is used in a bold mission to serve Christ. May God bless us—in peculiar ways—with unity, wisdom, courage, and creativity—to share our Lutheran Christian faith with the world—to Christ's glory!

Dr. James "Jim" Gimbel is associate professor of religion and organizational leadership at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn.

May God bless us
—in peculiar ways—
with *unity,*
wisdom, courage,
and *creativity*—
to share our Lutheran
Christian faith
with the world—
to Christ's glory!

† † †



What Are Those *Lutheran Confessions* Anyway?



In Article II of our Synod's constitution, we state that the members of our Synod accept "without reservation (1) The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice; (2) all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God."

Article II then lists the documents found in the Book of Concord of 1580. But why are we tied to these 500-year-old (and, in some cases, even older!) writings?

More than historic relics, our confessions identify who we are as Lutherans, connect us to the Church of all ages, and most

of all, keep the Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners at the heart of our life and proclamation.

Our Common Faith

The first three of our confessions are not peculiar to Lutherans; they are shared by the whole Church. Written to combat false teaching, the *Apostles*, *Nicene*, and *Athanasian* creeds summarize teachings of Scripture held in common by all believers. We speak them in church as the living voice of the faithful who have gone before us. Next time you say the Creed, note the clear confession that the Jesus who died and rose for us is fully God and fully human.

Our confessions also locate us within the "one holy catholic (i.e. universal, Christian) and apostolic church" (Nicene Creed). They show our teaching to be not a human invention (e.g., by Martin Luther), but the true teaching of the Church from the beginning. Scripture itself is the final authority, but our confessions teach us how to read the Bible so that Christ and the Gospel remain the beating heart of the Church's life. We use the confessions as *a* standard that has been found faithful to *the* standard.

A Winsome Summary

The *Augsburg Confession*, considered primary among the specifically Lutheran confessions, was prepared in 1530 by Philip Melancthon, an associate of Martin Luther, as a winsome summary of Bible teaching. Publicly read in Augsburg, Germany, on June 25th of that year before Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor and the most powerful ruler of the time, this confession shows how every article of faith is intended by God to bring the greatest possible comfort to the penitent sinner. At the heart of the Augsburg Confession and essential for Lutherans is the teaching that "we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our own merit, work, or satisfactions, but . . . we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us" (Kolb/Wengert, pp. 38, 40; Fortress Press, 2000).

Philip Melancthon also wrote the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* over the next year to defend the confession against the Roman authorities who tried to refute Lutheran teaching. The Apology thoroughly defends Scripture's teaching, especially justification by faith alone.





Teaching the Basics

Alongside the Augsburg Confession are the *Small* and *Large Catechisms* of Martin Luther, both published as tools for pastors and parents to teach the basics of the faith—The Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, etc. See how clearly the Catechism confesses Christ:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true. (Luther’s Small Catechism, Second Article, [CPH 1986].)

Making Things Clear

In 1536, word came that the pope might call a council of the church. Martin Luther’s prince instructed him to make clear what could not be compromised. The council did not take place until 1545, but in 1537 Luther published the *Smalcald Articles* to lay out what such a council should discuss. Philip Melancthon prepared a companion piece called the *Treatise on the Authority and Primacy of the Pope*, setting forth our teaching on the Church and the pastoral ministry.

Resolving Issues

After Luther’s death in 1546, Lutheran territories in Europe endured doctrinal controversy over basic teachings such as “the freedom of the will,” “the righteousness of God,” the “person of Christ” and the Lord’s Supper. In addition, war with the Holy Roman Empire made 1546–77 anything but peaceful for

Lutherans. In the late 1570s, however, God used the efforts of Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, and others to resolve the controversies under the Word of God in what is called *The Formula of Concord*. Carefully, on each issue, they laid out the nub of the controversy, listed what Lutherans on the basis of Scripture affirm, and also clarified what we therefore reject. Every article points to Christ, true God and true man, crucified and raised from the dead for our salvation. For instance, “we teach, believe, and confess the following: (1) That the divine and human natures in Christ are personally united, and therefore, that there are not two Christs (one the Son of God and the other the Son of Man), but one single Son of God and Son of Man” (Kolb/Wengert, pp. 509–510).

Our Identity

Gathered into the Book of Concord in 1580, all these confessions still identify our congregations and pastors as Lutheran. At every installation of a pastor, he promises to be faithful to them, saying, “I make these confessions my own because they are in accord with the Word of God” (*LSB Agenda*, p. 179). In so doing, he is telling the people that they should expect from him a ministry focused on Christ crucified for our sins and centered in the Word and Sacraments as God’s way to deliver the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection. This promise, freely made, means the Lutheran pastor will teach and practice this theology *because* it is the saving truth. Every aspect of Lutheran theology is biblically designed to bring the greatest comfort in Christ to anyone who knows he or she is a sinner in need of grace and forgiveness.

And we desire that gift for everyone.

**Rev. Herbert C. Mueller Jr. is president
of the LCMS Southern Illinois District.**



Every Picture Tells a Story (Lutheran) Story



When you picture “a Lutheran,” whom do you see? Your pastor, perhaps preaching on Sunday morning? A loved one, praying before a family meal? A favorite teacher or choir director? Maybe your neighbor across the street?

Those might be some of the more typical images we conjure of fellow LCMS members. But as a church body of nearly 2.4 million members, you may be surprised at our variety of interests, backgrounds, professions, and pursuits. Among our fellow LCMS members we include

- a world-class BMX racer;
- a pioneering black model for Coca-Cola;
- a veteran forensic investigator, now with Laborers for Christ;
- a Lincoln scholar;
- a mother-daughter duo who helped inspire the first National Childhood Cancer Awareness Day;
- a former Liberian accountant who translates worship services into the Konobo language for his fellow countrymen now living in Kansas City.

These are just a few of the people we have encountered the past year or who have come to our attention through your efforts. Before we trek too far into 2009, here then are some “snapshots” from 2008 that celebrate the variety of members with whom our church has been blessed and who share with us the blessings of our Lutheran Christian faith.

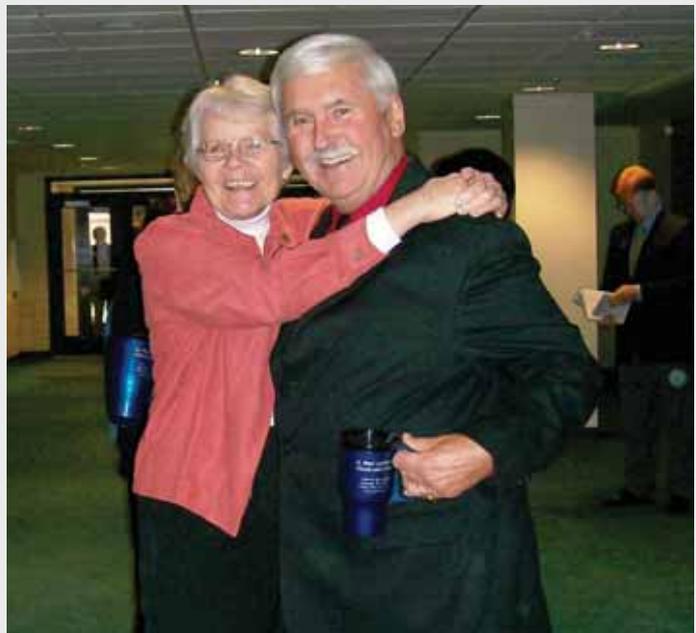




Sharon Hinck
Novelist
St. Michael Lutheran Church
Bloomington, Minn.

In each of her seven published novels, Sharon Hinck tells the story of a woman who becomes an unlikely hero. Her latest, *Stepping into Sunlight* (Bethany House), is about the challenges of a Navy chaplain's wife during her husband's first deployment—including witnessing a shocking crime. Hinck generally presents Christian characters without specifying their denomination. But in her new novel, Hinck, a 2008 Christy Award finalist, hints at the heroine's Lutheran roots. As a Christian novelist, Hinck appreciates her Lutheran foundation—especially, she says, “as it relates to grace and how that plays out in the lives of my characters.” This mother of four (ages 16 to 25) only published her first novel in 2006. She writes at a prolific pace and also makes time to host Christian writers groups and retreats. Says Hinck: “God is so awesome and multifaceted that we need a variety of art forms to communicate with Him and about Him, including the very vibrant and powerful art form of fiction.”

St. Peter Lutheran Church in Macomb, Mich., has grown to more than 3,200 members but keeps its small-church charm with the help of two dedicated lay-people—a “hugger and a mugger.” Longtime member and former St. Peter teacher Lorraine Rosso covers the narthex before each of the five weekend services, greeting worshipers with her trademark smile and warm embrace. For first-time visitors, that hugging is followed by another St. Peter tradition—a mugging. Al Weatherly, armed with a travel coffee cup bearing the church logo, makes home visits to all St. Peter's guests. “People are surprised to see me, and surprised that the church would give them such a nice mug,” Weatherly says. “But, boy, do they love it!”



Lorraine Rosso and Al Weatherly
A ‘Hugger and a Mugger’
St. Peter Lutheran Church, Macomb, Mich.



Dr. Leo S. Mackay

**Vice President, Corporate Domestic Business
Development, Lockheed Martin Corporation
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Alexandria, Va.**

Dr. Leo S. Mackay has worn many hats. A 1983 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, he flew F-14s with the Navy's Fighter Squadron 11 and attended Fighter Weapons School, the TOPGUN program. In 2001, President George W. Bush appointed him deputy secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Today, in addition to his corporate duties, Mackay also serves as chair of Lutheran Housing Support, the LCMS charitable and educational organization that strives to revitalize communities, strengthen churches, and turn families into first-time homeowners. Mackay is passionate about helping LHS reach out to the nearly 200,000 veterans who are homeless on any given night, according to VA statistics. "It's a great tragedy when one who has worn the uniform of our country finds himself or herself homeless," Mackay says. "Enabling affordable, decent housing for all people—but especially for these heroes—is a priority."

Bethany Price

**World Class BMX Racer
Grace Lutheran Church
Eugene, Ore.**

She's a mother, a bookkeeper, and—hang on to your helmet!—a world-class BMX (bicycle motocross) racer. As a youngster at Life! Lutheran School in Eugene, Bethany Price loved to ride mountain bikes with her friends. Last spring, at 28, she captured second in the 2008 Union Cycliste Internationale BMX World Championships in Taiyuan, China. When she isn't coaching the dance team at her old school, Price is perfecting her jumps, preparing to compete in the 2009 World Championships in July in Australia.





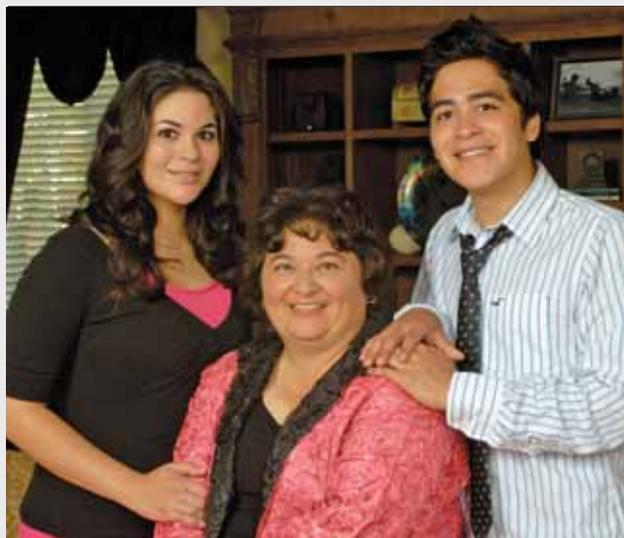
Top left: Kennedy Bougher (left) and Stacy Moriarty; insert: Kennedy Bougher. Top center: Rep. John Shimkus (right) at a Thrivent Builds/Habitat for Humanity site. Bottom left: Melissa Salomón (center) with daughter, Elizabeth, and son, Andrés Alejandro.

Stacy Moriarty and Kennedy Bougher

**Mother-Daughter Duo Who Helped
Launch First National Childhood Cancer
Awareness Day
Peace with Christ Lutheran Church
and School, Aurora, Colo.**

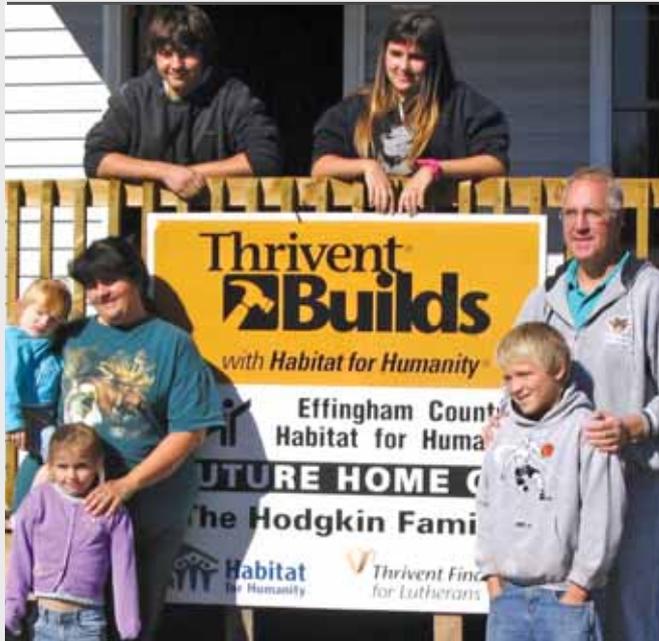
“I think God chose me for a reason.” When 12-year-old Kennedy Bougher told her mother she thought there was a purpose for her bone cancer, Stacy Moriarty took that belief all the way to Washington, D.C. The duo launched a campaign that led Congress to proclaim Sept. 13, 2008, the first National Childhood Cancer Awareness Day. In conjunction with the observance, the “Warrior Princess” (Kennedy’s nickname in her battle back to good health) and her mom took part in the debut Miracle Party Masquerade Ball in Denver to support kids with the devastating illness. Kennedy missed most of the 2007–2008 school year to undergo treatment. Now the sixth-grader, who was pronounced cancer free in July, bravely tackles catch-up challenges at Peace with Christ Lutheran School in Aurora. The Warrior Princess and mom already are making plans for the second annual National Childhood Cancer Awareness Day and Miracle Party in September. Their vow: to do all they can to conquer a disease that strikes some 12,000 children every year. To learn more, visit www.caringbridge.org/visit/kennedy1.

In 1992, Melissa Salomón reluctantly agreed when the Pacific Southwest LWML invited her to speak at the district convention about the Hispanic ministry where she came to faith. Why, she wondered? She felt no connection to the LWML or, for that matter, any part of the Lutheran church outside her little Spanish-speaking congregation in the San Fernando Valley. To her surprise, Salomón discovered she shared much in common with LWML women—wives and mothers with a passion for doing the Lord’s work. Today, helping ethnic women connect with the church-at-large is the personal mission of this former attorney and mother of two college students. As a member of the LWML Gospel Outreach Committee, Salomón helped create Heart to Heart Sisters, a program that links ethnic women with the church beyond their congregations and, in turn, helps the church use their unique gifts. She is looking forward to this summer’s national convention in Portland, Ore., when the LWML expects to welcome its 100th Heart to Heart Sister leader. How exciting, Salomón says, that the LWML is reflecting the church’s diverse ministries, which, in turn, reflect the diversity of heaven.



Melissa Salomón

**LWML Gospel Outreach Chair; Director of
Lutheran Hour Ministries—Mexico; Community Life
Director at Concordia Lutheran Church, Chula Vista, Calif.**

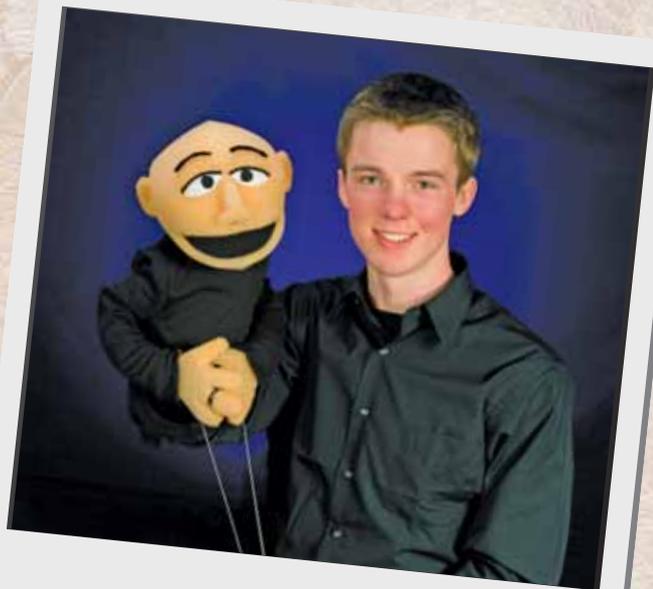


Rep. John Shimkus

United States Congressman
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Collinsville, Ill.

Those teaching skills he honed at Metro East Lutheran High School, Edwardsville, Ill., still come in handy, says U.S. Rep. John Shimkus. “As a member of Congress, you have to educate your constituents about the impact of public policy,” says the representative from Illinois’ 19th congressional district. He cites one recent example: the \$700 billion bailout. “You not only cast your vote, but you have to explain, in layman’s terms, about capital systems, the law of supply and demand, and competition.” When he starts his seventh term in 2009, Shimkus will be one of three LCMS members in Congress. (The others: Reps. David Reichert, Washington, and Cynthia Lummis, Wyoming.) As the top-ranking Republican on the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, the legislator expects that addressing food safety (and preventing problems such as last year’s challenges with tainted imported veggies and meat) will remain a top priority. He’s a Holy Cross member, but Shimkus also worships at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Collinsville, where wife Karen is a part-time organist. A Shimkus family highlight on tap for 2009: middle son Joshua’s confirmation.

In the hands of Kyle Sorkness, foam and fabric characters captivate all ages. This creative high school senior helped start Trinity’s WASSUP (Worshiping an Awesome Savior Using Puppetry), a troupe so popular there’s a waiting list clamoring for performances. In July, Sorkness won a spot on the Puppetry Dream Team at the International Festival of Christian Puppetry and Ventriloquism near Chicago, Ill., a gathering of some of the world’s top performers and teachers. With college around the corner, this busy young man is considering director of Christian education or Christian outreach programs. Sorkness is interested in a career where he can continue to reach out with puppetry—a unique way to present a message, he says, and make it memorable.



Kyle Sorkness
Puppetry Dream Team Member
Trinity Lutheran Church and School
Fergus Falls, Minn.

Ken and Ellie Chitwood

Lutheran Church of New Zealand's
First Director of Christian Education Intern
and First Director of Parish Music
Manawatu Lutheran Parish,
Palmerston, North New Zealand

When Ken and Ellie Chitwood met, the Concordia University, Irvine, students connected over a conversation about international missions. One month after their 2007 marriage, the new graduates were heading Down Under to serve a Lutheran parish. Ken, 24, is the Lutheran Church of New Zealand's first director of Christian education intern. Ellie's role also marks a first: the LCNZ's debut director of parish music. Although the pair are new to the New Zealand church body, both have been assigned a surprising number of national responsibilities. Ellie, 23, is editor of the LCNZ national newsletter and directed a national youth camp. Ken taught two semesters at the Bible College of New Zealand and has served on LCNZ national committees. The outdoors-loving Chitwoods also make time to enjoy the country's many recreational opportunities—even the hugely popular extreme sport of bungee jumping. In February, this internationally inclined twosome takes off for South Africa. Both will serve at the Themba Trust, a faith-based foundation that operates two boarding schools for South Africa's rural poor.

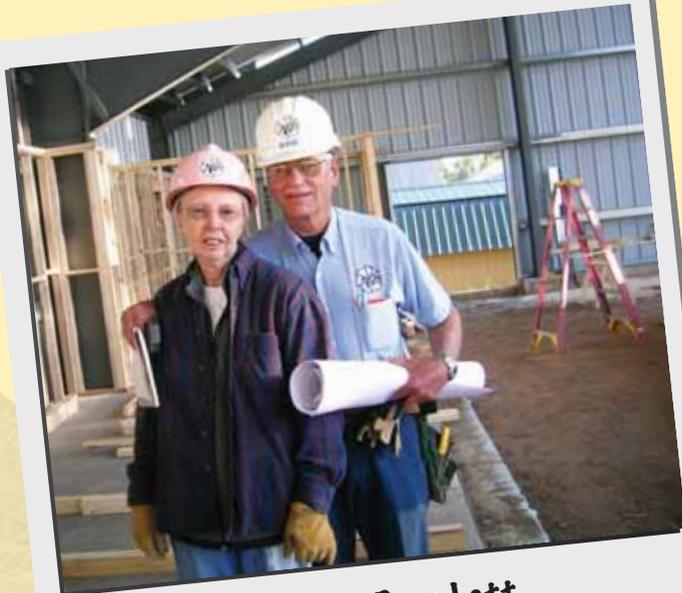


To raise the kind of dough needed to help fund a fast-approaching mission trip, Suzan Reeve helped stir up another dough—pastry for 123 apple pies, in one day! This mother of soon-to-be 13 (ages 11 to 20, including six birth children, six adopted children, and another adoption in the works) had participated in an LCMS World Mission short-term mission trip to Cambodia and wanted to share that life-changing experience with her children. At the urging of fellow Trinity Lutheran member Jean Jaskierny, Reeve and daughters Taylor, 15, and Kristina, 17, signed up for a mission trek to inner-city Los Angeles and Tijuana, Mexico, coordinated by the Iowa District West's IOWAY (Individual Outreach with Adults and Youth). Jaskierny, Anna Nebelsick, and other members helped peel, mix, and roll during the marathon baking day, selling pies from the church kitchen. In July, the Trinity group joined people from 24 LCMS churches on the mission trip, sharing Christ's love through neighborhood cleanup and VBS projects. How does a mother of 13 make time for volunteer mission work? "I pray," says Reeve, who also credits a great husband and support system. "If someone is considering a short-term trip with youth or your own children, you should consider that to be the Lord calling you."



Suzan Reeve
 Mother of 13 Mission Team Volunteer
 Marathon Apple-Pie Baker
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Glenwood, Iowa

Left to right: Taylor Cambridge, Anna Nebelsick,
 Suzan Reeve, Kristina Reeve.



Nina and Dave Lett
 Registered Nurse and Retired Forensic
 Investigator, Now with Laborers for Christ
 Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, Englewood, Ohio

For 22 years, Dave Lett probed the manner, mode, and cause of death as a forensic investigator in Montgomery County, Ohio. Today, he and wife Nina (a retired registered nurse) travel the country as participants in our Lutheran Church Extension Fund's Laborers for Christ program, helping LCMS congregations tackle building projects to strengthen ministry and stay within their budgets. These veteran Laborers (13 years) help build Lutheran churches and schools that will touch lives for generations to come. The change from his former tools of trade, Lett agrees, is like night and day.

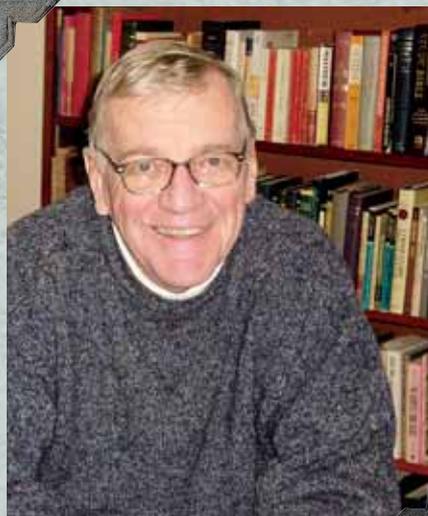
Edie Smith, below left, poses with her decades-old Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) mite box and LWML President Janice Wendorf, who visited her last November. Smith regularly drops coins into the box, which gets "amazingly heavy," she says, and periodically forwards the money to the LWML. Wendorf described her host as "a humble, gentle woman who loves to help people."



Edith 'Edie' Smith

LCMS Foundation Planned-Giving Donor
Zion Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio

In her 80 years, Edie Smith has been through a lot: Running from Russian troops in the middle of the night during World War II. Living through risky brain surgery and cancer. Scrambling to earn a living after a divorce at age 57. Smith has "learned to trust in the Lord completely," she says, and hasn't been disappointed. God, she says, "will get you out of anything." Smith, who is German and a life-long Lutheran, says giving to the church has always been important to her: "I feel if you're blessed, it's your duty to give back." When her husband left her, Smith had no income. Intent on staying out of debt, she picked up odd jobs and then worked at a day-care center, living frugally and buying stock when she could. About seven years ago, she decided to share her wealth with the church through an LCMS Foundation gift annuity, which provides her with a lifetime income and will benefit her favorite ministries upon her death. She feels "a little selfish," she says, because she gets such joy out of giving. Smith encourages others to give and says "it will come back to you, many times over. You can never out-give God."



Rev. Paul A. O. Boecler

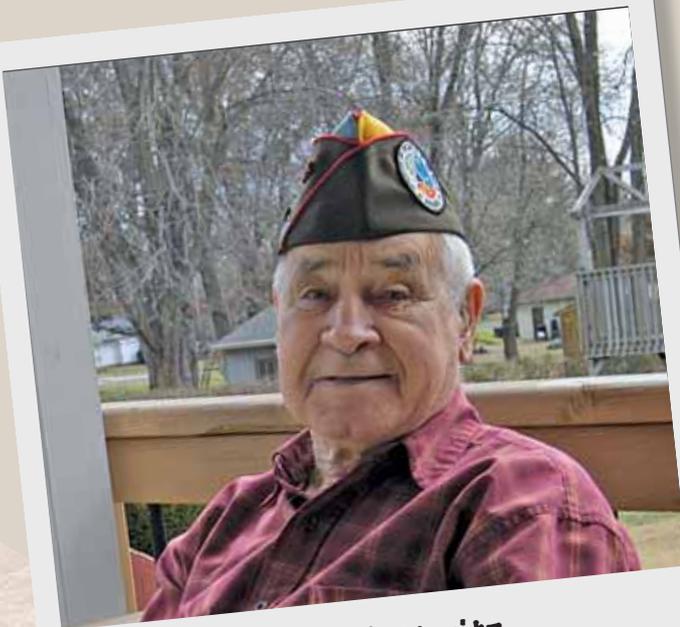
Longtime Professor from Longtime
Pastoral Clan
Our Savior Lutheran Church
Grand Rapids, Mich.

When Rev. Friedrich Boecler began his ministry in Strasburg, Germany, in 1680, he launched a long line of Boeclers who would serve the Lord. In November, more than 300 years later, friends and family highlighted the latest chapter in the Boecler pastoral history—the 77th birthday of Rev. Paul A. O. Boecler and the 50th anniversary of the year the veteran pastor and professor began his ministry. The 1956 Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, graduate arrived at St. Mark Lutheran Church, Milford, Ohio, in 1958. Over the years, he touched countless young lives, teaching for a decade at the late Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, Ind. (1966–76) and for 24 years at Concordia College—New York (1976–2000). Another ministry stop: serving West Point cadets as vacancy pastor at the academy's Lutheran chapel. Between Friedrich and Paul, the only break in the Boecler pastoral parade happened when Paul's great-grandfather emigrated from Germany to America. That Boecler pursued business instead of ministry. But, as most clans can surely attest, every family tree has at least one branch that grows in a different direction!

When Mary Alexander's dorm mother insisted that the college student interview with Coca-Cola officials scouting for models, Alexander thought it would be a waste of time. "Nobody is going to pick a country girl to do modeling," said Alexander, who, in 1955, was a Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University) junior. But the pretty coed was the only student selected, turning the youngest of 10 children from an Alabama farm family into a pioneering model. When Alexander appeared in magazines and on billboards in the mid-1950s, she was the first black woman (except for famous athletes and entertainers) to represent Coke in print ads. After graduation, Alexander left modeling for a career as a teacher and school administrator. She rarely thought about her days before the camera—until the beverage giant tracked her down in 2007 with an invitation to the new World of Coca-Cola museum in Atlanta. That's where Alexander's ads are on display and where she was honored for her milestone role in Coke's African-American marketing initiative. In Ocala, fellow congregants were surprised when Pastor Ronald Mueller posted a clipping about the Our Redeemer member. "I never talked about it," Alexander, 74, says of her "model" past. "We'd been married for three years before my husband even knew!"



Mary Alexander
 Pioneering Coca-Cola Model
 Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Ocala, Fla.



George Kottwitz
 Veteran Humor Hobbyist
 Trinity Lutheran Church, Edwardsville, Ill.

As hobbies go, George Kottwitz's may be the most amusing. That's because the former railroad conductor and switchman has collected jokes and funny stories throughout most of his 89 years. After reading or hearing a "good one," what this master of "did you hear the one about" enjoys most is giving others a good laugh. Of course, the decorated World War II and Battle of the Bulge veteran has seen some grim times. But he prefers to focus on life's lighter side, compiling 13 self-published joke books. His gags and one-liners have appeared in national publications, including the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Capper's Weekly* (now *Capper's*). A Kottwitz joke printed in *Reader's Digest* tickled Johnny Carson so much the comedian told it on his late-night television show. For the past 20 years, the veteran humor hobbyist has delighted *Lutheran Witness* readers with faithful contributions to the magazine's "Shedding Some Light" page. Even before a certain editor reads a postcard from Kottwitz, he's grinning from ear to ear!

Continuing a tradition: Steve Magee (right, back row) sang at Reformation services when he was a child. Today, he continues his service to the LLL. With Magee and the children of the 2008 Reformation choir are Dr. Gil McMillan, president of LLL Districts 4 and 19, and choir director Dianne Stopponi.



Steve Magee
Lutheran Layman's League Member,
Longtime Reformation Service Participant
Trinity Lutheran Church, Sacramento, Calif.

Mary Pearson

As a boy, Steve Magee joined other children each October to sing before hundreds of worshippers. More than 40 years later, Magee has graduated to the adult choir and still joins in jubilant performances of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" at the annual Reformation Sunday service sponsored by Lutheran Layman's League Districts 4 and 19 in Sacramento, Calif. The Oct. 26, 2008, celebration marked the 63rd consecutive service. As always, hundreds of people packed the event, held at Town and Country Lutheran Church. Choirs (adult, children's, bell, and chime) performed glorious music, anchored, of course, by a majestic pipe organ. Rev. Paul Hoffmann, son of the late Lutheran Hour Speaker Dr. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann, preached. Dr. Gil McMillan, president of Districts 4 and 19, maintains the master list of volunteer organists and choir directors, who rotate from year to year. Most recently, Dianne Stopponi guided the junior vocalists. Like Magee, 56, a system software specialist for the state of California, many former children's choir members still participate in the long-running service. "It helps us remember Martin Luther, who helped remove 'man's requirements' for eternal salvation," Magee says. "It's a celebration of freedom."

Kim Plummer Krull is an editor-at-large for *The Lutheran Witness*. She is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Des Peres, Mo.

Paula Schlueter Ross, Jennifer McBurney, Ellie Menz, Lois Wolf, Dr. Victor J. Kollmann, Rev. Brian Davies, and Rev. John W. Otte also contributed to this story.

Web EXCLUSIVE!

Find more profiles of LCMS members online (lcms.org/witness):

- **Thomas F. Schwartz**, Illinois state historian and a Lincoln scholar.
- **Linda Davis**, deaconess intern and HIV/AIDS educator, Papua New Guinea.
- **The Stahlke family**. With a recent adoption, a young set of brothers and sisters is now complete.
- **Carol Kallina**, Orlando, Fla., Lutheran Academy teacher and service-dog facilitator.
- **Queyah Clarke**, a former Liberian accountant and now a translator for worship in the Konobo language.
- **Joshua Salzberg**, an apprentice film editor and aspiring Hollywood screenwriter.
- **Logan Dee Harkey** and **Lance Graf**, state champion rodeo riders.

lcms.org/witness



Note: The "official notices" are published for a single purpose only: giving notice of a result, namely, changes in the Synod's membership rosters by the addition or deletion of the names of individuals and congregations. It is not always appropriate that reasons for the changes be identified in the published notices. Since a change can occur for any of a variety of reasons, no assumptions may be made merely from the fact that a change has occurred.—Ed.

Official Notices— From the Districts

JOHN M. GILL, Macomb, Mich., has resigned from the Ordained Minister of Religion roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as of Oct. 31, 2008. He is, therefore, not eligible for call consideration.—Rev. C. William Hoesman, president, LCMS Michigan District.

REV. TERENCE CHAN was appointed circuit counselor for Circuit 1, replacing REV. THEODORE B. ZIMMERMAN. REV. TIMOTHY L. HUBER was appointed circuit counselor for Circuit 3, replacing REV. DAVID T. SHOEMAKER. REV. SERGEI S. KOBERG was appointed circuit counselor for Circuit 7, replacing REV. THOMAS G. NORRIS JR. REV. CLARENCE H. EISBERG was appointed circuit counselor for Circuit 12, replacing REV. MICHAEL S. FRANCKOWIAK.—Dr. Robert D. Newton, president, LCMS California-Nevada-Hawaii District.

Official Notices— Colloquies

KENYATTA TYRONE COBB, Buffalo, N.Y., and LEONG WA CHU, Flushing, N.Y., have completed all requirements for the Pastoral Colloquy Program through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible for a call.—Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

JIMMY LALLJIE, Queens Village, N.Y.; JOHN E. PRIEST, Delhi, N.Y.; JAMES FOLZ, Stevens Point, Wis.; and ROBIN J. DUGALL, Engle, Idaho, have submitted their applications for the Pastoral Colloquy Program through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. EMILY ANDERSON, Alura, Minn.; LEIGH SANDLIN, Long Beach, Calif.; GAYLE GALLOWAY, Wheaton, Ill.; BRENDA HANCOCK, Carol Stream, Ill.; LAURA PAVLOV, Las Vegas, Nev.; JODI ANGELI, Shawano, Wis.; DAWN COOKSEY, Kirkwood, Mo.; TRACEY CRITES, Fontana, Calif.; BRENDA SUE SCHMIDT, St. Louis, Mo.; SUSAN WINSCHER, Riverside, Calif.; and ANN TERENCE, Mount Vernon, N.Y., have submitted their applications for the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through CUenet. YOUNG CHUNG, Topeka, Kan., has submitted an application for the Director of Parish Music Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn. CRAIG MATTES, Plainfield, Ill., has submitted an application for the Director of Christian Outreach Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn. Correspondence regarding their applications should be directed within four weeks after publication of this notice to Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

SANDRA J. SPITZ, Loda, Ill.; KIMBERLY A. KELLY, St. Joseph, Mich.; ROBERT E. KOEHNE, Maywood, Ill.; and KAREN S. HOUSER,

Huntertown, Ind., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Mark A. Waldron, Director of Teacher Colloquy, Concordia University Chicago, 7400 Augusta St., River Forest, IL 60305-1499.

DIANE WILLIAMSON, Indianapolis, Ind., has completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible for a call.—Brian L. Friedrich, President and CEO, Concordia University Nebraska, 800 N. Columbia Ave., Seward, NE 68434-1599.

HOLLY GULLIVER, Saginaw, Mich., and PAMELA LAUNER, Fort Wayne, Ind., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Mr. Kevin Brandon, Dean, School of Education, Concordia University, 4090 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2797.

MELISSA THEIS, Houston, Texas, has completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Jim McConnell, Assistant Colloquy Program Director, Concordia University Texas, 11400 Concordia University Drive, Austin, TX 78726.

CAMERON LEHMAN, Oxnard, Calif., has completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Becky Peters, Director, Concordia University, 1530 Concordia W., Irvine, CA 92612-3203.

Official Notices— Requests for Reinstatement

WALTER M. SCHNEIDER, Sterling, N.Y., has applied for reinstatement to the Minister of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. JAMIE SCHUTTE, St. Michael, Minn., and LUCAS E. STOELTING, Clarksville, Tenn., have applied for reinstatement to the Minister of Religion—Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Correspondence regarding these applications should be directed to the undersigned for receipt no later than Feb. 5.—Dr. Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

Notice to Promote to Continuing-Level (Tenure)

The Board of Regents of Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis., herewith gives notice of intent to promote to a continuing-level appointment the following: DR. MARGARET BLODGETT, DR. THOMAS FEIERTAG, DR. JAMES FREESE, and DR. TERI KAUL. Any comments concerning this intent should be addressed to the undersigned within six weeks after publication of this notice.—Rev. Patrick T. Ferry, Ph.D., President, Concordia University Wisconsin, 12800 N. Lake Shore Drive, Mequon, WI 53097-2402.

Call for Nominations

The LCMS Board for Mission Services, LCMS World Mission Asia Management Team, and The Hanoi School Asia Advisory Board of **Concordia International School—Hanoi (CISH)** requests nominations for **head of school**, to be taken up on or before July 1.

The newly planned and developing Concordia

International School will offer expatriate and Vietnamese children a high-quality, whole-child, American-style education program. The school will be comprised of students in pre-K through 12th grade and be firmly rooted in a values-based spiritual context. Candidates for the head-of-school position should possess the following:

- Membership in and rostered by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS)
 - An advanced graduate degree (M.A., Ed.D., Ph.D.), preferably in education, leadership, or related fields
 - Prior experience in an administrative role in education *or* leadership in the development of a new organization
- Candidates should be theologically articulate and demonstrate a lifestyle based on a strong Christian faith and in line with the LCMS and CISH mission and core values. In addition, the desired candidate's life and work should demonstrate a significant understanding and application of high-quality
- **leadership skills** (including visioning and strategic planning);
 - **management skills** (including data-driven and experience-based intuitive decision making);
 - **networking skills** (including collaboration and teamwork in developing a spiritual learning community).

For inquiries, a position description, and an application, contact Ron Scherch, director of Recruitment Services, LCMS World Mission, via e-mail at ron.scherch@lcms.org, or call 800-433-3954. And/or contact Dr. Allan Schmidt, Asia school developer and search committee chair at allschm@aol.com. For information on the LCMS in Vietnam, please visit <http://www.lcms.org?5836>.

Positions

The Lutheran Witness *welcomes notices for positions available at affiliated entities and Recognized Service Organizations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The deadline for receipt of such notices is the 20th of the month two months prior to the publication month (e.g., Jan. 20 for the March issue). Send notices to karen.higgins@lcms.org.—Ed.*

The following institution of the Concordia University System is seeking candidates for these positions:

Concordia College Selma seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **Vice-President for Student Services, Assistant Librarian, History, English, Mathematics, Business, Campus Chaplain.**

For more information about these and other CUS positions, including complete job descriptions, qualifications, and application process, visit <http://www.lcms.org/cusjobs> and click on "Positions Available at Our Campuses."

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM), St. Louis, Mo., seeks to fill the position of **division director of International Ministries**. This experienced manager is needed to direct the operation of all international Lutheran Hour Ministries offices, project centers, and contact offices around the world.

Duties involve leading the International Ministries Division by setting vision and planning and evaluating programming, staff performance, and training. This includes supervising area counselors and other selected staff team members to prepare and empower the international offices to proclaim the Gospel message appropriately to

their local populations; stimulating healthy growth of local support in each country where LHM has an office; controlling division budget by reviewing spending on a regular basis; maintaining productive working relationships with local board and partner-church leadership; and interfacing with the Ministries Committee, Board of Governors, the international staff leadership, and LHM headquarters staff.

Qualifications: Bachelor's degree required, advanced degree preferred; experience working with international cultures and laws; background in nonprofit management and understanding of administering off-site work facilities; capability to lead employees to create a high-functioning team; ability to work effectively with employees at all levels; background in fund-development very helpful; active membership in a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregation or partner church; a love for ministry; and an empowering and positive “can do” attitude and team spirit.

Send resume with cover letter to Jackie O'Guin, Human Resources, Lutheran Hour Ministries, 660 Mason Ridge Center Drive, St. Louis, MO 63141-8557; fax: 314-317-4291; e-mail: lhmjobs@lhm.org; Web site: www.lhm.org.

LCMS Texas District, Austin, Texas, is seeking to fill the position of **Treasurer**. This position directs all fiscal affairs and is involved in all fiscal planning and budgeting for the district. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to, all accounting procedures, management of the daily cash flow and investment of funds as necessary, preparation of the annual district budget and oversight of the budgets of all departments, and preparation of the monthly financial statements. The treasurer is responsible for all insurance coverage for the district and shall also assist congregations as specific needs arise.

The position is located at the Texas District office in Austin; limited travel. A minimum of a bachelor's degree with an accounting major is strongly desired; salary commensurate with experience.

Submit resumes by Jan. 31 to Gwen Hohle, LCMS Texas District, 7900 E. Highway 290, Austin, TX 78724; ghohle@txdistlcms.org.

Anniversaries

The Lutheran Witness *welcomes notices of no more than 50 words from LCMS congregations about their upcoming “milestone” anniversaries. The deadline for receipt of such notices is the 20th of the month two months prior to the publication month (e.g., Jan. 20 for the March issue). Send notices to karen.higgins@lcms.org.—Ed.*

Good Shepherd, Collinsville, Ill., will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its church and 25th anniversary of its school January through May 2009, with former pastors to serve as guest speakers. Visit goodshepherdcollinsville.org or call the church office for details at 618-344-3151.

Trinity, Alamosa, Colo., will celebrate its 90th anniversary on Jan. 18 during worship service, with Rev. David Schneider as guest preacher. A potluck and program will follow the worship service. Pastor Schneider also will give a mission presentation during Bible study before worship. Contact the church office at 719-589-4611.

Holy Cross, Saginaw, Mich., will celebrate its 160th anniversary at the 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. worship services Jan. 25, followed by a potluck. Rev. C. William Hoesman, Michigan District presi-

dent, will be the guest speaker. Contact the church office at 989-793-9723 for other scheduled events.

Immanuel, Downers Grove, Ill., will celebrate its 100th anniversary with special worship services on Feb. 8, with Dr. Dale A. Meyer, president of Concordia Seminary, as guest preacher. A celebration luncheon and fellowship will follow. Special musical programs also will be held throughout 2009. Contact the church office at 630-968-3112 or visit ilcdg.org.

St. Paul's, Osseo, Minn., will rededicate its church building on Feb. 1, the 50th anniversary date of its original dedication. Dr. Lane Seitz, Minnesota South District president, will be the guest preacher at the 10 a.m. festival service. A dinner will follow. Contact the church office at 763-425-2238.

Bethany, Omaha, Neb., will celebrate its 70th anniversary throughout June, with guest speakers Rev. Kenneth Holdorf to preach on June 7, Rev. Martin Gruenke to preach on June 14, Rev. Wallace Vinovskis to preach on June 21, and Rev. J. Brad Urbach to preach on June 28.

In Memoriam

Obituary information is provided by district offices to the Synod's Office of Rosters and Statistics. Any questions about content should be referred, therefore, to the appropriate district office.—Ed.

ORDAINED

CHRISTENSEN, KENNETH DEAN; Nov. 23, 1933, Kimballton, Iowa, to July 27, 2008, San Gabriel, Calif.; son of Chris and Mattie (Nielsen) Christensen; graduated Fort Wayne, 1994. Served 1994–2005. Ministries/parishes: Bertrand, Neb.; El Monte, Calif.; retired 2005. Survivors: Helen (Stedman) Christensen; son: Kenneth; daughters: Kerin, Katherne Fuentes, Kristen Westvik, Kristina Schmidt, Kendra Vaught. Memorial service: Aug. 2, 2008, Temple City, Calif.; interment: Scottsdale, Ariz.

GUEBERT, PAUL NORMAN; March 7, 1923, Spencer, S.D., to Oct. 23, 2008, Orange, Calif.; son of Rev. Arnold and Anita (Burgdorf) Guebert; graduated St. Louis, 1947. Served 1947–1974, 1975–1988. Ministries/parishes: Prince George, British Columbia, Canada; Mannville, Red Deer, Alhambra, Markerville, Alberta, Canada; Wausa, Leigh, Neb.; Girard, Kan.; Norwalk, Calif.; retired 1988. Preceded in death by his wife, Marie (Bitsch) Guebert. Survivors: son: Timothy; daughters: Linda, Julia, Elaine. Funeral: Oct. 29, 2008, Orange, Calif.; interment: Oct. 29, 2008, Whittier, Calif.

KOCH, GLENN A.; May 5, 1929, Eustis, Neb., to June 30, 2008, Peoria, Ariz.; son of Arthur and Viola (Lehmann) Koch; graduated Springfield, 1962. Served 1962–1988. Ministries/parishes: Burley,

Idaho; U.S. Air Force chaplain; Kaiserslautern, Germany; retired 1997. Preceded in death by his daughter, Ruth. Survivors: Martina (Hanson) Koch; son: David; daughters: Vicki Chandler, Sandra Bauer, Donna Leach. Funeral: Aug. 2, 2008, Peoria, Ariz.; cremation.

REINHARDT, HAROLD L.; Feb. 16, 1926, New Orleans, La., to Oct. 24, 2008, Lacey, Wash.; son of Rev. G.B. and Edna (Barthel) Reinhardt; graduated St. Louis, 1949. Served 1949–1973, 1977–1990. Ministries/parishes: Monroe, La.; U.S. Army chaplain; Tacoma, Wash.; retired 1990. Preceded in death by his sons, Kenneth and Steven, and daughter, Susan. Survivors: Dorothy (Jahn) Reinhardt; son: Donald; daughters: Ellen Bridges, Judith Nupen. Memorial service: Nov. 9, 2008, Lakewood, Wash.; interment: Nov. 7, 2008, Kent, Wash.

UTTECH, WILLIAM ALFRED; March 14, 1908, Sheboygan, Wis., to Oct. 26, 2008, Shawano, Wis.; son of Otto and Caroline (Kerwin) Uttech; graduated St. Louis, 1933. Served 1933–2008. Ministries/parishes: Shawano, Port Edwards, Wis.; Ste. Genevieve, Mo. Preceded in death by his wife, Ruth (Kohls) Uttech. Survivors: daughters: Ruth Runge, Kathleen Strei, Mary Robinson. Funeral and interment: Oct. 30, 2008, Shawano, Wis.

COMMISSIONED

BRILL, PAUL G.; April 17, 1931, Doland, S.D., to Sept. 12, 2008, Robbinsdale, Minn.; son of Paul and Esther (Olsheski) Brill; graduated River Forest, 1964. Served 1953–1994, 1994–1999, 2000–2003. Schools/ministries: Denver, Littleton, Colo.; Murray, Utah; Sauk Rapids, Brainerd, Minn.; Overland, Kan.; retired 2003. Survivors: Geraldine (Harnisch) Brill; sons: Steven, Tobyn; daughters: Paulette Schroeder, Tonya Fischer. Memorial services: Sept. 15, 2008, Sauk Rapids, Minn.; Sept. 18, 2008, Castle Rock, Colo.; cremation.

HOFFSCHNEIDER, TODD JAMES; May 28, 1966, Lincoln, Neb., to Sept. 20, 2008, Fort Smith, Ark.; son of Burton and Joan (Blum) Hoffschneider; graduated Seward, 2004. Served 2004–2008. Schools/ministries: Buckley, Ill.; Fort Smith, Ark. Survivors: Sherry (Thorn) Hoffschneider; son: James; daughters: Becky, Rachel. Funeral and interment: Sept. 25, 2008, Waco, Neb.

SPREHE, RAYMOND H.; Nov. 28, 1920, Buckley, Ill., to Oct. 12, 2008, Urbana, Ill.; son of Henry and Theadora (Knueppel) Sprehe; graduated River Forest, 1942. Served 1943–1985. Schools/ministries: Round Lake, Peoria, Ill.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; retired 1985. Survivors: Velma (Janssen) Sprehe; son: Rev. Ronald; daughters: Carol Liston, Joyce Close, Norma Gledhill. Funeral and interment: Oct. 17, 2008, Buckley, Ill.

Not Three, Not Two, but One King

by Jonathan C. Watt



Read Matthew 2. It is a common picture this time of year: three kings, decked out in kingly robes, crowns and all, surrounding the baby Jesus in the manger to present their kingly gifts; three wise men on bent knee worshiping their Savior. But maybe this picture is not that accurate. Most modern translations use the word *Magi* to speak about these late visitors to Jesus' cradle.

What kind of people were these "Magi"? What kind of a reaction might the first readers of Matthew's Gospel have had to them? (Acts 13:6, 8; Dan. 2:1-12)

Magi worked for kings and gave "magical" advice in exchange for money. We see something similar today in palm readers, psychics, and fortune-tellers. Most people view such people as hustlers, not as legitimate professionals. So these Magi were unusual, unexpected visitors to Jesus' bedside.

The "Magi" might not have been "wise" men either. What indications of that do you see in these verses? (Matt. 2:2, 12)

The Gospel writer highlights the ignorance of the Magi. For the most part, they do not seem to know what's what. They first go to the city where a "king" should have been born, only to be told he is not there, but elsewhere. If not for the warning in a dream, they would have returned to Herod with the information he needed to kill the child they found.

So why then does St. Matthew tell us about these visitors? What differences do you see between Herod's reaction and the Magi's reaction to Jesus? (Matt. 2:2-10; 16-18)

What kind of king was Herod? Why was he so angry? (Matt. 2:16-18)

King Herod was placed on the throne by the Roman emperor. He held his power through the might of the Roman army. He was a cruel king, not wanting to share his power with anyone. He was willing to kill to protect his power.

What title does Matthew give to Joseph, Jesus' father? (Matt. 1:20)

Who else receives the same title? (Matt. 1:1; 12:23; 20:31)

What kind of person would be called "Son of David"? (2 Sam. 7:4-17; Is. 9:6-7)

Based on God's promise to King David, his people were looking forward to a new king, better than David and different from other kings.

What kind of a king is described by the Old Testament prophets? (Micah 5:2-5; Is. 11:1-5; 53; Zech. 9:9)

God's faithful people longed to see a king who was more than an earthly king. He would be Shepherd, Teacher, and Savior from sin. How does Jesus fulfill these expectations? (John 21:15-19; 3:1-15; 12:12-19; Matt. 27:32-54)

What were his parents told Jesus would do? Why did Jesus come? (Luke 1:26-33; Matt. 1:18-21)

Jesus is the One True King. He is unlike any other king. He serves His people with His very life. Through His life, death, and resurrection, we have eternal life with Him in His kingdom.

How do we receive forgiveness? (Rom. 6:3-10; Matt. 28:19-20)

St. Paul describes King Jesus, His kingdom, and those in His kingdom. What is that Kingdom (and its people) like? (Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 1:13-23; Phil. 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 1:26-31)

Rev. Jonathan C. Watt is pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Creston, Iowa.





Marriage as God Intended

It's become clear that ongoing vigilance is required if traditional marriage is to be protected and preserved for future generations.

In November, voters in three states—Arizona, California, and Florida—adopted constitutional amendments to protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman. This is good news, but it's become clear that ongoing vigilance is required if traditional marriage is to be protected and preserved for future generations.

After the November elections, many who wish to have same-sex relationships legitimized in the eyes of government showed their determination to reach their goal by any means possible. Members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and other defenders of traditional marriage must respond with compassion and love while steadfastly defending the marriage relationship as instituted by God (Gen. 2:24).

In October, the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples in that state have a constitutional right to marry. Connecticut then joined Massachusetts and (briefly) California as the only states where courts have legalized gay “marriages.” Such a judicial trend drags our American culture one step closer to systemic moral decline.

Those who value the fundamental and foundational understanding of marriage as God instituted it must be prepared to face countless legal and personal assaults with resolve, prayer, love, and thoughtful preparation. In my view, the potential for court-ordered same-sex unions illustrates the serious need for a marriage amendment in every state—so that marriage as it has been clearly understood for millennia cannot be overturned and redefined by a court that simply overthrows the will of the people and the governmental process, denying natural order in the process.

In its ruling, the Connecticut Supreme Court compared interracial marriage, specifically the rights of blacks and whites to marry, with the rights of homosexual couples to marry. This same argument was raised last month before the Iowa Supreme Court as it heard a similar case. There was a time, of course,

when the races were prevented from coming together in marriage. However, to compare that historical reality to homosexual marriage today is a faulty comparison at best. Interracial marriage brings men and women together in a union that does not defy the laws of nature, while same-sex marriage goes against the biological, anatomical, physiological, and reproductive facts of life.

A primary purpose of marriage is to bring new life into the world through the procreation of children and to raise them to be productive members of society. Marriage between any beings other than one man and one woman changes entirely the meaning of marriage and renders impossible the gift that only the union of husband and wife brings to every child who is born: his or her birthright.

In the present legal and cultural context, we and other Christians cannot be silent on this matter lest we dishonor the God of Creation by our complacency.

Finally, a pastoral word is appropriate regarding this topic. There may be some reading this article who are in full agreement with protecting traditional marriage, yet find themselves conflicted by their love for a family member or close friend who is living a homosexual lifestyle with a committed partner. Our Synod has clearly articulated our collective understanding of Holy Scripture that God's love and forgiveness in Christ are real and remain constant for every person. In all matters of behavior displeasing to God, including any sexual lifestyle contrary to His Word, He calls us to repentance, desiring that we go and sin no more (John 8:11). Such is God's love for sinners. And that includes us all.

Jerry Kieschnick
John 3:16–17

Lives Transformed through
Christ, in Time . . . for Eternity!
e-mail: president@lcms.org
Web page: www.lcms.org/president