



THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

VOL. 129 NO. 1 JANUARY 2010

The Church in a Post-Church Culture

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NAVIGATING IN A
POST-CHURCH WORLD

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LUTHER
FOR TODAY

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WHAT IS
YOUR AREOPAGUS?



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.



A Special Focus: The Church in a Post-Church Culture

To the Reader

Happy New Year. And welcome to the 129th year of *The Lutheran Witness*. In this day and age, that is an achievement for a publication of any kind. Truly, we have been blessed.

Through all those years we have been blessed also with faithful readers as we have sought to, in the words of Rev. Charles A. Frank, the first editor of *The Lutheran Witness*, “bring home to Americans the solid and sound doctrine and practical truths expounded by the Lutheran church.”

Frank also set as a goal for the then-new magazine “to instruct, admonish . . . comfort and educate the church and its members.” Those goals remain ours today and are exemplified by the mission statement you see at the top of this page.

When Frank became the first editor of *The Lutheran Witness* in 1882, the magazine featured eight pages of solid type in three columns. Today, of course, we are not only full-color, but also available online (lcms.org/witness) and, with the help of our Board for Communication Services colleagues, able to share information on Facebook and Twitter, too. Quite a change from 1882, when publishing required a printing press and distribution was measured in weeks and not in minutes and seconds, as is the case with electronic media today.

As with the past two years, we begin 2010 with a special issue, this time devoted to the topic of the Church’s role in what many thoughtful observers have defined as a post-Church culture. The topic is introduced by Dr. Robert Newton, president of the California-Nevada-Hawaii District, and expanded and enhanced by two additional district presidents, Rev. Herbert Mueller Jr. (Southern Illinois) and Rev. Dan Gilbert (Northern Illinois). In addition, Rev. John Nunes, president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, offers a reflection on “Luther for Today.”

In the coming months, in addition to our regular departments, expect stories on rural and small-town ministry, kids and their worldviews, stewardship, the value of Lutheran education, and a variety of other topics, all from our Synod’s best writers, educators, and theologians—and also from you, our readers.

We hope you will enjoy this issue and those to come. May our heavenly Father bless you and your family in the New Year.

James H. Heine, Editor
The Lutheran Witness
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On the Web

You can find more information about our church at lcms.org. For up-to-date Synod news, visit the online site of *Reporter*, our sister publication, at lcms.org/reporter. At lcms.org/witness this month, find these Web-exclusive stories:

- “Which Map?,” an online sidebar to our cover story by Dr. Robert D. Newton.
- “Ministry in the Margins,” by Rev. Anthony A. Cook.
- “God’s Prescription for Happiness,” a “Classic Witness” feature by Rev. Martin S. Sommer.

By the Numbers: The LCMS Today



One Mission One Message One People

Members (Baptized)	2.337 million
Members (Confirmed)	1.803 million
Congregations	6,123
Average weekly attendance	155.2
Avg. annual communicant contribution	\$744.55
Districts	35
Clergy (Includes emeritus)	9,010
Clergy (Serving a parish)	5,359
Missionaries	889
Educators	18,096
Chaplains/pastoral counselors	677
Campus ministries	215
Recognized Service Orgs. (RSOs)	299
International presence	88 countries
Sister/partner churches	32
Preschools	1,311
Elementary schools	934
High schools	108
Sunday Schools	4,839
Vacation Bible Schools	3,544
Weekday religion classes	3,571
Colleges	10
Seminaries	2

Source: LCMS Church Information Center and LCMS 2008 *Statistical Report*.



One of Those Years

For me, the beginning of the new year is always exciting. What will the ensuing months bring? Where will I fail? Where will I succeed? How will I grow? Coupled with looking ahead, I always make it a practice to look behind. To reflect on the closing year, to remember, and to ask, “What has God been up to in my life?”

Like most of you, my days in 2009 were pretty similar to each other; I would wake up, think about my schedule, and step into the day only to come home, relax, and close out the hours hanging out with my family. Beginning to end. Pretty simple.

But June 3 of this past year was different from any other. My 18-year-old daughter, Makenzie, was a professional dancer with the Bay Area Houston Ballet and Theatre. She

and some of her friends decided to organize a photo shoot by the water for fun. She donned her leotard, secured her long, false eyelashes, and headed out the door to my parents’ home on Taylor Lake in Seabrook, Texas, the perfect setting to capture her graceful form. Everything went as planned.

The photographs were amazing. Poised on the dock, Makenzie and her partner leapt and “pirouetted” (whatever that is) as the camera froze them on film against the shimmering water and wispy pink sunset. Stunning.

At the end of the evening, they headed home. As was her habit, she called me to let me know she was on her way.

“Hi, Dad. I had so much fun! I love you. I’m on my way home.”

She never made it.

An hour went by before I noticed I hadn’t yet heard the back door slam and her announcement, “I’M HOME!” *Maybe they had stopped to talk with my parents*, I thought. *Maybe they went out for a Jamba Juice* (her favorite). *Maybe she did come home after all, and I didn’t hear her glide upstairs to take a shower.* So I started texting her.

"I thought you were on your way home."

No response. I tried a few minutes later.

"You know you have to work tomorrow."

Again, my phone was silent. Finally, we shot a final text to her:

"You better have a good reason for being late."

She did.

At 8:10 that evening, only minutes after our last conversation, the car in which she was a passenger was broadsided. Makenzie was killed instantly. One moment, she was here; the next, she was gone. My beautiful daughter, who loved the Lord and was loved by so many, was taken to be with Jesus.

When my wife, Kellie, and I arrived at the hospital, the E.R. staff immediately ushered us into the family waiting room and said they'd check on Makenzie's status. There we sat, or rather, paced. Just my wife and me, alone with our fears, our questions, and our Lord.

After several year-long minutes, Kellie stepped out of our room and grabbed a police officer who was whispering to another officer in the hallway outside our door.

"Can you please tell us what happened to our daughter? Is she all right? Can we see her?"

The officer paused, stepped into our waiting room, and said the words I thought I'd never have to hear: "You'd better sit down."

Honestly, I don't remember him telling us that Makenzie was killed in the accident. He didn't need to. I knew at that moment that our beautiful daughter, who was such a centerpiece of joy in our family, was dead.

In the days that followed, our family ventured through emotions that I didn't know existed (or, at least, I didn't think I'd ever experience). Pain, sorrow, and grief topped the list, partnered with hope, love, and confidence. Yes, you read that right; hurt and joy, loss and fullness. Feelings that don't normally grace my experiential halls together were walking hand in hand as I prepared to bury my daughter.

At Makenzie's celebration service at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Houston June 8, my son and youngest daughter spoke beautifully about their love for their older sister. Kellie and I closed out the service with some final words, and I gave the blessing to the 1,300 people in attendance. With tears streaming, everyone in the room knew that God was there. And that He had gathered us to give us comfort and hope.



Over these past few months of loss, love, transition, and change, many people have remembered that day and said, "You both are so *strong*," and "We admire your *faith*," and even, "Even in the midst of your grief, you seem to be at *peace*."

Truthfully, Kellie and I struggled to see how those accolades fit. But recently, I realized that the "strength, faith, and peace" that others recognize in us are not our creation. They had been given to us by our Lord. He had been preparing us for the evening that changed our lives forever.

You see, a long time ago, we began our days reading about this God who says He loves us. We began learning more about this "Divine Mentor" who opened our eyes to His power and grace. We understood that God had defeated death through the sacrifice

of His Son, and we knew that He was faithful and still in control. Makenzie knew all of this as well.

So, on the evening of the accident, we knew who was in charge and to whom we needed to turn. We knew God's character, His ability, His heart. We knew that Makenzie was alive in heaven because Jesus had changed her heart, and we knew she believed in Him as her Savior. We also knew that God is a God who wastes nothing; that this seemingly random accident has a purpose that is unfolding in the lives of all who knew Makenzie.

We don't need to ask the "why" questions because God told us that His grace is enough. We don't need to spiral down into the cold darkness of depression because God showed us the warm light of His love. We don't need to fear tomorrow because His mercies are new every time the sun crawls out from below the horizon. Our strength, in the middle of our loss, was realized *before* June 3, and it carries us day-by-day, morning by morning, moment-by-moment.

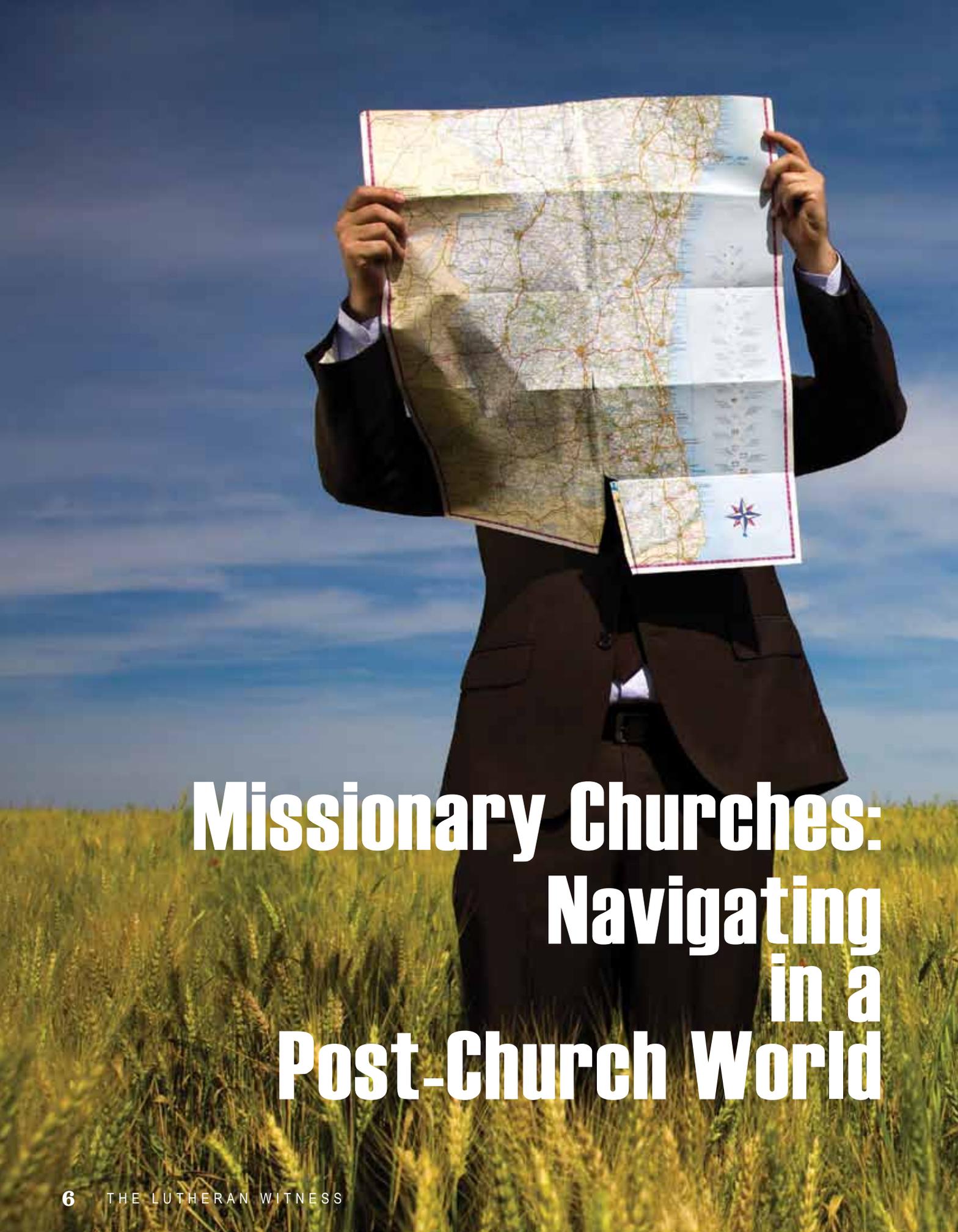
I pray that God keeps you from the journey on which He has placed our family. But whatever the Lord has planned for you this year, never forget that every morning into which you walk, His compassion, love, and mercy are holding your hand. For our family, we know by God's grace that every day that passes is a day closer to seeing Makenzie dance again. His compassion is new every morning.

*Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is Your faithfulness.*

Lam. 3:22-23 NIV



Rev. Todd Stocker (toddstocker.wordpress.com) is a writer and communicator. He lives with his wife, Kellie, and children Nathan and Maddie in Woodbury, Minn., where they attend Woodbury Lutheran Church.



Missionary Churches: Navigating in a Post-Church World

In an increasingly secular and pluralistic society, what is the status of the Church, and how do we engage the unchurched around us?

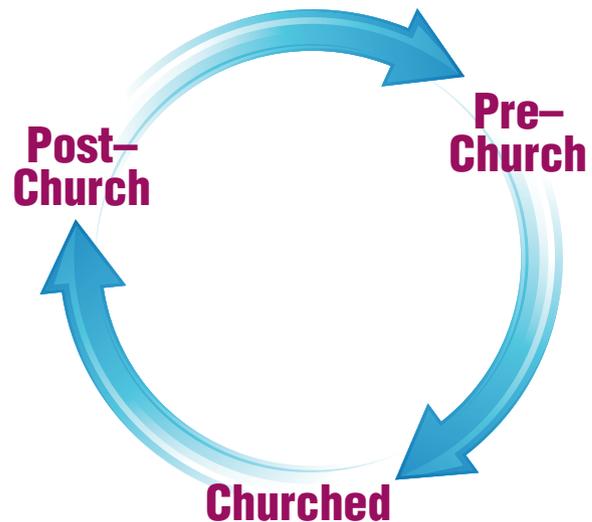
Imagine trying to drive in Chicago with a street map of San Francisco. You probably can't. While both cities are edged by water and have lots of tall buildings, they are nothing alike. Though they share names for several streets, trying to drive in the one with the map of the other would prove frustrating. No matter how hard you tried, you simply wouldn't get anywhere. Confused and exasperated, you'd finally conclude: *It's time to change maps!*

As God's missionary people, we also need to change maps in order to navigate in this present day. Changes in our society and culture, especially regarding the Church, have come fast and furiously. It's as if we went to bed one night only to wake up the next morning in a vastly different world. Once vibrant and growing churches question whether they will remain open for another year. Many pastors and people feel guilty for not reaching their communities with the Gospel, while well-intentioned mission sermons often leave them discouraged, even defensive. And in their defensiveness, they begin to reason that faithfulness has only to do with preserving the true faith, whether or not that faith is proclaimed to the nations.

Mission work requires faithfulness. As Lutheran Christians, we are acutely aware of the need to be faithful at a time when secularism and religious pluralism assault the Church on every side. While striving to be faithful, however, many find themselves unable to connect their communities with the Gospel. Along with faithfulness we need wisdom—wisdom to understand the time and contexts into which Christ has called us to serve as His missionary people.

The Context

All mission contexts boil down to three: *Pre-Church*, *Churched*, and *Post-Church*. *Pre-Church* refers to a context in which the Church has not been established; so the culture is wholly unchurched. The *Churched* context finds the Church firmly established in the community and culture. The *Post-Church* context finds the Church's significance in the community waning. These contexts move from one to the next in a circular rather than linear fashion, as the following diagram suggests.



Churches, like other social organisms, exist in relationship to a larger society defined by cultural boundaries that clearly mark those who are members (insiders) from those who are not (outsiders). Insiders are careful to maintain their boundaries, recognizing that any penetration by something (or someone) foreign may harm the community. The key difference between cultural insiders and outsiders is how they view these boundaries: Insiders work at protecting them; outsiders work at penetrating them.

In any given context, Christians live and serve either as cultural insiders or outsiders. Knowing which one we are is as critical to mission work as using the right map is to navigation. Consider the following questions:

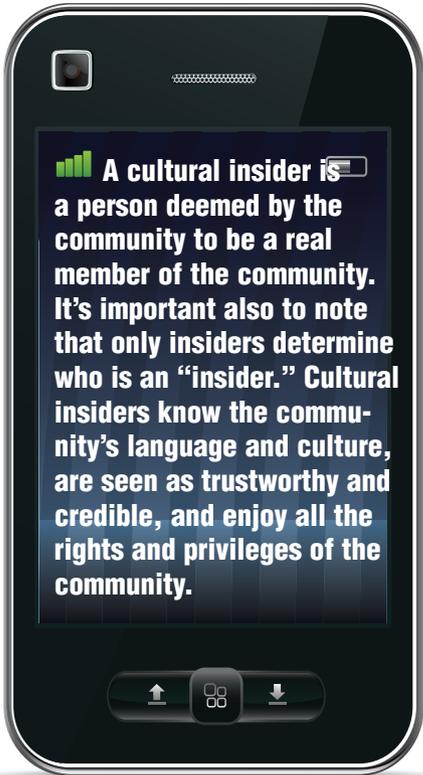
- *Who* can speak with credibility regarding spiritual issues?
- *When* do these conversations take place?
- *Where* do they take place?
- *What* is the starting place for these conversations?

Each of these questions is indispensable to Gospel proclamation. Critical to their consideration is understanding that they can be answered only by cultural insiders. Knowing which one we are in each mission context—insider or outsider—tells us whether we (or someone else) must provide the answers.

Pre-Church Contexts

Missionaries serving in a *Pre-Church* context must assume the role of cultural outsiders, recognizing that non-Christians are cultural insiders. Non-Christians, then, must

What's an 'Insider'?



A cultural insider is a person deemed by the community to be a real member of the community. It's important also to note that only insiders determine who is an "insider." Cultural insiders know the community's language and culture, are seen as trustworthy and credible, and enjoy all the rights and privileges of the community.

Cultural insiders, therefore, must play a critical role in communicating the Gospel.



answer the *who, when, where,* and *what* questions. Christian witnesses cannot assume that they will be trusted or credible just because they are Christians. Furthermore, they must adapt their ministry to meet the unchurched when and where the unchurched meet. Finally, and most important, they do not determine the starting place of the conversation. The unchurched insiders do. The missionary begins with their questions or concerns and carefully, lovingly moves from there to the Good News of Jesus. Through these means, the missionary penetrates the boundaries of the unchurched culture and the Gospel starts to work on the inside.

Critical to penetrating the culture is to become "permeable," that is, to diminish as many "foreign" or outsider elements as possible. Thus, missionaries learn the language and culture of the unchurched insiders. They get involved in the life of the community, getting

to know and be known by them. They recognize that it may take some time before they are considered credible enough to have something worthwhile to say about life issues, especially spiritual matters. Missionaries begin, then, as *learners* (students) of the insiders' world. Over time, they operate as *traders*, exchanging or comparing their understanding of issues with those of the insiders. Eventually they may be invited to speak authoritatively about life and faith issues as *contributors*. Missionaries know that they have become trusted contributors when insiders confide to them the brokenness of their world and their inability to restore things to what they know is right (the law of God written on their hearts).

Missionaries need to recognize that they might never become cultural insiders. Cultural insiders, therefore, must play a critical role in communicating the Gospel. Proclamation depends

more upon those we would call “laity” (especially the newly baptized) than on the missionary. The Holy Spirit also raises up various gifts (people) from among the insiders’ community through whom He speaks His Word both to the unchurched and to those being gathered by the Word (Ephesians 4).

Christians in a Pre-Church context focus primarily on unchurched people hearing the Good News. So they stay highly engaged with the unchurched, maintaining a porous boundary between themselves and the unchurched. Rather than creating their own place where they can invite their friends and relatives to hear about Jesus, they go to where (and when) the unchurched naturally gather. There they listen and apply God’s Word to the needs and questions the unchurched are raising. Eventually, a number of people gather around God’s Word, and a church is born. As more and more people become Christian, the Church increases in cultural and social significance, often replacing the unchurched community as the new insiders.

The Churched Context

Almost every dynamic of churched and unchurched people described in the Pre-Church context reverses in the Churched context. Christians are

now the cultural insiders, and the unchurched the outsiders. The Church has become an essential part of the community, central to—even shaping—the shared history of the community. As such, it enjoys significant credibility, wielding considerable influence in the larger society. Consider the Christian church’s role in Europe or early America in shaping the languages and cultures of much of the Western world. (For example, modern German was built substantially on Luther’s translation of the Scriptures; J. S. Bach’s influence on classical music remains to this day.)

As insiders, the Church now answers the *who*, *when*, *where*, and *what* questions of Gospel communication. Who speaks with authority and credibility? Our pastor does. When and where do we discuss spiritual matters? We come to church. What is the starting place for our conversation? We naturally consider questions important to Christians, using language and theological categories developed within the Church—e.g., as Lutherans, we often ask questions among ourselves that are more theological than practical in nature, concerning ourselves with true doctrine, proper distinction between Law and Gospel, and theological matters that distinguish us from other Christian churches.

Almost every dynamic of churched and unchurched people described in the Pre-Church context reverses in the Churched context. Christians are now the cultural insiders and the unchurched the outsiders.

As cultural outsiders, the unchurched tend to gravitate toward the Church. They share the Church-influenced language and culture, support the cultural values established by the Church, and appreciate the Church’s role in society. Desiring to be cultural insiders, they willingly go through whatever process the Church requires to gain membership. They become permeable, willing to learn the language and culture of the Church. On the other hand, the Churched no longer focus on the unchurched; they’ve become virtually invisible. It’s generally assumed that almost everyone is a Christian. (How often have we heard, “America is a Christian nation”?)

In contrast to missionaries in a Pre-Church society, pastors in a Churched society minister from the position of key cultural insiders, both in their churches and communities. Often highly educated, they are respected as spiritual and ethical leaders, trusted guardians of the community’s culture and values. Gospel proclamation belongs primarily, if not exclusively, to them. Evangelism occurs, therefore, by people inviting their unchurched friends and neighbors to come to church in order to hear what the pastor has to say. The several spiritual gifts operating in the Pre-Churched era atrophy or consolidate into one—the pastor/teacher.

As churches grow, more time and energy must be devoted to the needs and concerns of the members, which often means less attention is given to the unchurched. In order to serve the members, the churches increasingly invest in buildings and programs,





Navigating Spiritual Conversations



multiplying ministries to the Church. In an effort to protect their members from the dangers present in the non-Christian (or heterodox) world, they fix clear boundaries between those inside and outside their church. Over time the Church becomes preoccupied with its institutional needs while losing sight of those still outside the Kingdom.

The Post-Church Context

The Post-Church context is a complex combination of the previous two. In short: *The larger community around the Church has become increasingly unchurched, more and more reflecting a Pre-Church context of ministry. At the same time, the Church continues to operate with the assumptions of the Churched society.*

Simply speaking, both the church and the unchurched claim the insider's position, while viewing the other as alien. Because both view themselves as cultural insiders, neither has the need or inclination to become permeable in order to connect with the other. Instead, each tends to strengthen its own boundaries in an attempt to maintain its own identity, health, and future. Boundaries become all the more important as each feels threatened by the other.

The Post-Church context presents incredible challenges for local congregations, especially in regard to their Gospel outreach to the unchurched world.

First, they are caught off balance. Having for so long held the position of cultural insiders, they still build their outreach ministry on the assumptions and practices that worked in the Church era—basically that the unchurched will be attracted to their church or ministries. They cannot understand why individuals and families find the soccer field, Starbucks, or just sleeping in more appealing than going to church on Sunday morning. Or why people challenge the traditional Christmas tree in the town square, or the Ten Commandments in a court of law. These cultural changes make no sense.

Second, and more important, Christians and churches struggle to find ways to connect meaningfully with the unchurched. The struggle centers in large measure on the Church's inability to take up the position of cultural outsider, that is, to become permeable in regard to its own boundaries in order to penetrate the boundaries surrounding the unchurched world. Such permeability seems inappropriate, or worse, unfaithful in light of our Lord's call to His Church to remain true to Him (in the world but not of it). Intuitively, faithfulness seems to require the thickening and sharpening of the Church's boundaries in order to protect itself and its confession from the assaults of secularism and religious pluralism.

So how do Christian churches become permeable—the posture of missionaries in a Pre-Church world—and remain faithful? This is the million-dollar question facing every church desiring to follow Christ in a Post-Church world. Is it possible to surrender the boundaries (the protective walls) without losing the essential life and integrity of the faith? Our Lord thought so. As He looked to His own death, by which He would gather the nations to Himself, He told His disciples, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat

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falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24 ESV). What has to die in the seed is not its essence, just its protective husk. Missionary permeability and doctrinal integrity are not biblically exclusive. However, from the New Testament until today, churches desirous to be faithful have struggled with meshing the two.

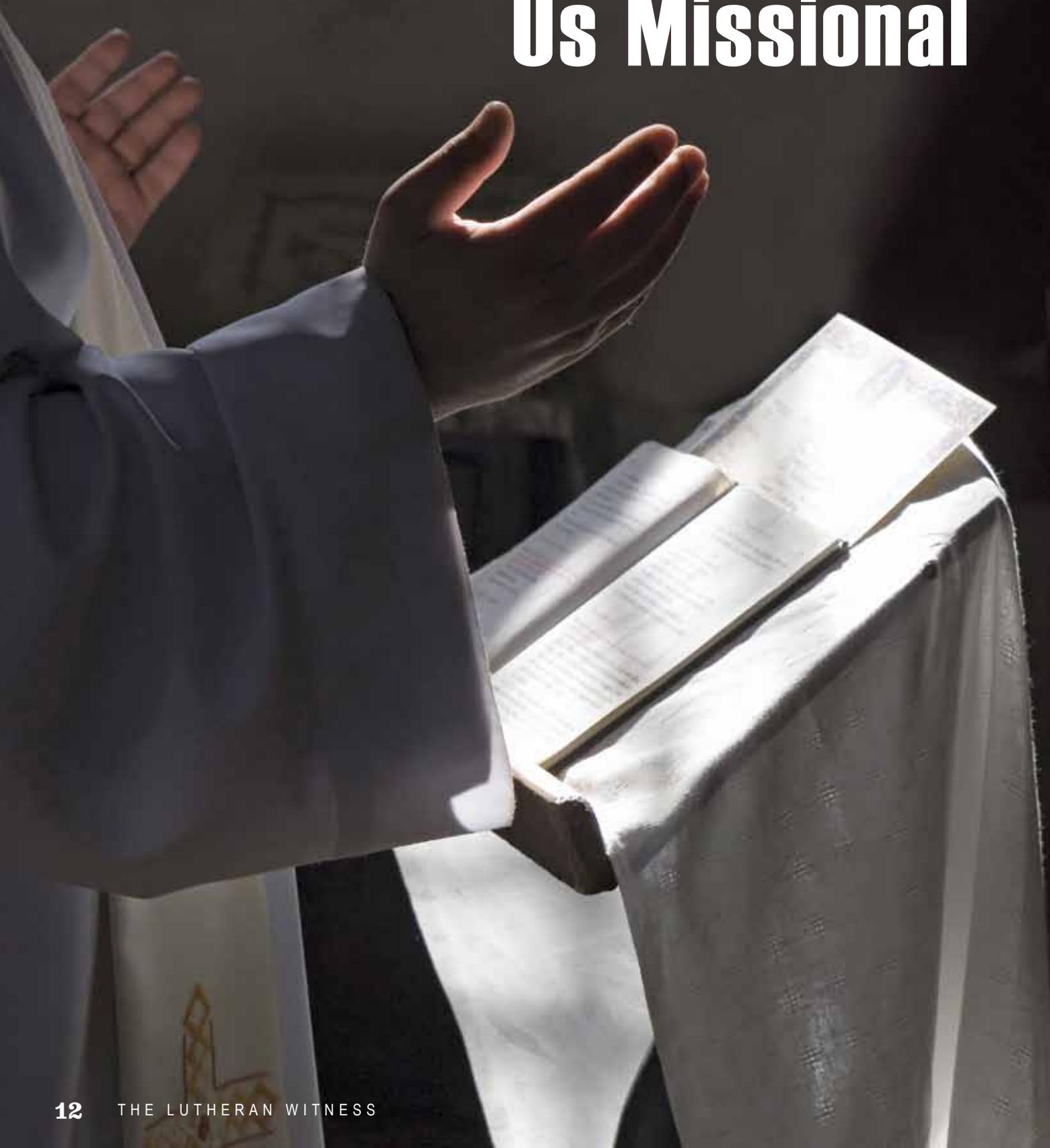
Consider St. James' words to St. Paul in Acts 21: "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk according to our customs." St. Paul's ability and requirement "for the sake of the Gospel" to "become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some" seemed to cause significant anxiety among the Judean believers (cultural insiders) that he was compromising the true doctrine as revealed through Moses in the Torah.

Confessional and missionary faithfulness require that we wrestle with these Gospel essentials in the light and for the sake of our Savior's purpose in coming into our world.



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Our Confessions Make Us Missional



Which is more important? Doctrine or mission?

For Lutherans, that's like asking whether a coin can have a "heads" without a "tails." Yet, "Pastor A" and his congregation are all about outreach but feel a concern for doctrine impedes their efforts. "Pastor B," on the other hand, becomes so focused on correct teaching he fails to lead his people in outreach. Pure doctrine is fine, says Pastor A, but never at the expense of people. Meanwhile, Pastor B is not opposed to outreach, though his shrinking congregation is surrounded by unbelievers.

Do you agree both Pastor A and Pastor B have something to learn? Our Lutheran confession must move us into the mission. These two must be one: doctrine and outreach. Neither is complete without the other.

Confession

Here we are not talking about confession of sin, but that our church identifies itself by specific statements of faith. The Bible is the Word of God and Christ the *only* Savior of the world. We trust we are forgiven and find favor with God solely by God's grace, for Christ's sake, through faith in Christ and His death and resurrection for us. This central teaching of the Bible is explained in our Lutheran Symbols, or Confessions (for example, Luther's Catechisms and the Augsburg Confession, all in the Book of Concord). Just as every U.S. ship flies the U.S. flag to identify itself, our Confessions, our Symbols, are our theological flag, identifying us as Lutherans. These do not add to the Bible but help us keep the central message of the Bible clear: *salvation in Christ alone*.

Mission

God's mission begins in the heart of the Father who created all things by His Word. The Father sends that Word in the person of His Son, sends Him into our flesh to give Himself into death that we might have life. The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit through the Word of God proclaimed to sinners. Jesus pours out His Spirit on His disciples and His Church so that they (we!) proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in His name to all nations (Luke 24:47). Disciples make more disciples by baptizing and by teaching all He has commanded (Matt. 28:18–20). Christ sends preachers to proclaim

His Word because "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17 ESV). He commissions the baptized to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). All this the Father gives the Son when He sends Him "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10) because God does not wish "that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God's mission and our confession show that any Lutheran congregation focused inward on itself has, in reality, forgotten what it means to be Lutheran. The Lutheran Confessions are focused outward, not inward. Over and over they repeat the phrase, "Our churches teach . . ." and "We believe, teach, and confess . . ." "We condemn" the contrary doctrine. These are dynamic, active, seeking words. Our church is a witnessing, proclaiming church.

"[T]he forgiveness of sins is preached *in the whole world*" (Smalcald Articles III 4, italics added). "In short, the whole Gospel and all the offices of Christianity belong here, which also must be *"preached and taught without ceasing"* (Large Catechism II, italics added).

Maximum Comfort

The heart and core of our biblical (Lutheran!) teaching really is good news! It brings maximum comfort to the sinner who knows his or her lost condition. This teaching is not a heavy burden, but a magnet that attracts and draws sinners to Christ. Our Augsburg

. . . our Confessions, our Symbols, are our theological flag, identifying us as Lutherans. These do not add to the Bible but help us keep the central message of the Bible clear: *salvation in Christ alone*.



Confession shows this clearly. In Article I we confess God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In a world of uncertainty, this one thing is sure: the name of God put on us in our Baptism. Article II teaches the true nature of our sin, inherited from our parents. If sin is only a small problem, we need only a small savior. But none of us can decide not to die! Sin is always fatal, bringing death and hell. Without Christ, we are completely lost. There is no escape. It takes a real Savior, God in human flesh, to rescue us. Therefore Article III confesses Jesus Christ, one person fully God and fully human, who truly died and rose from the dead for us. He is the Savior we need. In Him alone we live.

Article IV of the Augsburg Confession brings the maximum comfort: “Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4).”

The forgiveness of sins and justification by faith are like the hub and axle of a wheel. They are the center around which every teaching of Scripture turns, the hub that holds them all together. Baptism, Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, for instance, are not ordinances to follow but gifts of Jesus bringing the forgiveness of sins to the believer who receives them: Maximum comfort for the repentant sinner. Talking to anyone who is passionate about bringing the Gospel to people, you will find someone who has been broken, someone who knows what it is like to be desperate to hear this good news. That’s also what makes him desperate to tell others.

God Carries Out the Mission

That we may receive this faith, says Article V of the Augsburg Confession, God instituted the ministry of teaching the Gospel and adminis-

tering the Sacraments. Through these means God gives the Holy Spirit and brings people to faith when and where it pleases Him. You will not find the Spirit of God except in the Word of God, nor will the Word of God ever be found without the Spirit of God (see Acts 2). Because of this dynamic power of the Word of God (Rom. 1:16), the Lutheran Church is a proclaiming church. That’s why, at the command of Christ, the Church calls qualified men to fill the preaching office on behalf of all. Those baptized into Christ are also called by that Baptism to tell His truth. Yet, God does it all, by His Word.

The mission of God is carried out through congregations, pastors, and “holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd” (Smalcald Articles III 12). Strengthened and nurtured by Word and Sacrament, congregations send believers into the world to serve and to love *others*. (Our Synod’s *Ablaze!* movement fosters opportunities to share the Gospel, expand mission work, and revitalize congregations.) Congregations focused inward may have forgotten why we pray the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy Kingdom come”! Here, “we pray that the kingdom may come to *those who are not yet in it*, and, by daily growth that it may come to us who have received it. . . . Dear Father, we pray, give us first Your Word, so that the Gospel may be preached properly *throughout the world*” (Large Catechism III, italics added). This is why Lutheran congregations send missionaries to plant churches at home and abroad. This is why we ordain pastors and consecrate deaconesses to serve, why we send chaplains into the military and into prisons. This is why we commission teachers and have schools and preschools.

So how are you and your congregation focused outward? How will the people around you be connected to Christ? The life of God is not the result of moral instruction and moral living, but is God’s gift of a new relationship in Jesus Christ through repentance and faith. The beating heart of your congregation is the life of Jesus Christ—His life lived for us and offered up for us

on the cross. His life triumphant in His resurrection. His life freely given in His body and blood, in the forgiveness of sins, in the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit. Now, through our various vocations, Jesus *sends us* on His mission, for the sake of the hungry, the needy, the lost, the hurting, those who do not yet know Him.

Get Out There!

Confession of the truth—outreach to the lost. You will not be faithful in one without an equal emphasis on the other. To all who count themselves “confessional,” we say, “Great! Now get out there and confess!” Our Lutheran Symbols are clear and faithful expositions of God’s Word of Law and Gospel bringing the greatest possible comfort in Christ. Don’t hide this truth. God desires all to be saved. Don’t water it down, but bring it to as many as possible in winsome, relevant ways.

On the other hand, to all who put outreach at the top of their list, we say, “Excellent! Going into all the world

**The heart and core
of our biblical
(Lutheran!) teaching
really is good news!
It brings maximum
comfort to the sinner
who knows his or her
lost condition.**

with the Gospel of Christ is Christ’s own command!” We believe people are lost forever unless they hear the Word and are brought to faith in Christ. Outreach is what we are about. Now let’s be sure we are bringing people the “real deal,” the “good stuff” of God’s undeserved grace and mercy for the sake of Christ alone, received through faith alone. Bring the whole load, don’t water it down. Doctrine and mission are one.



Rev. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.
(SIDPresident@sidlcms.org) is
president of the LCMS Southern
Illinois District.

The quotations from the Lutheran
Confessions in this article are from
Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions
(pocket edition) published by CPH.



Luther for Today

From the differently formed to the unborn without an opportunity to ever form, from the hungry to the dispossessed, Luther links our mission with how we live, not only among family, friends, and neighbors, but also among the least in society.

God has called us to work in His own mission in this world—a task made as difficult as it is necessary because of human separation from God. Whether we are working in the field of international development or in the mission field of North America, our witness gains integrity as we engage the real situations in which real people scrape to survive in our sin-scarred world. Martin Luther himself remains ever-relevant in our search for clues to the spiritual condition of the people we aim to reach in this world.

Recently, I was involved in a meeting with U.S. Senator John Kerry and six others who work with faith-based, global organizations. It was an honor to represent Lutheran World Relief in this Washington, D.C., conversation with the senator from Massachusetts. When our talk turned to worldwide environmental issues, Sen. Kerry remarked that, in his estimation, Christians have impacted positively civil discourse in the United States and action around the globe. He especially noted how people who are motivated by the Gospel provide care for the poor and care for creation.

Arguably, these two ways of caring are intricately related—people living in poverty around the world often experience the worst consequences of environmental degradation. For example, small-scale farmers eking out an existence on the thinnest of margins have the least capacity to absorb the effects of deforestation, droughts, and expanding deserts.

Stress and Distress

Nearly 500 years ago, Martin Luther left the monastery in more ways than one. Luther's robust intellect embraced the realm of contemporary ideas as he demonstrated how overarching societal questions were, in fact, "God questions," raising themes as old as creation. His commentary on the first five chapters of Genesis tackles topics ranging from the environment to economics to marriage.

For example, Luther suggests that what remains of God's original plan for

marriage constitutes but a fraction of God's original intent, which Luther actually quantifies mathematically as possessing only about 1/100th of the ideal.

Though a strong desire for a spouse remains ordinarily in human nature, that interest is tainted by "the prurience of the flesh and the execrable lust which is also the cause of sundry adversities and sins" (Luther's Works [LW] 1:238).

The world in which we are in mission desperately—with brutish necessity—seeks to rationalize explanations of evil. On the hook of the Law's guilt, we aim at self-justification. It's ironically amusing to hear the euphemisms people use to blunt the severity of sin's sharpness: Sins are sometimes now called "issues"; temptations are downgraded to mere "distractions"; perversions are cutely termed "peccadilloes"; immorality is lightened to "inappropriate behavior." But sin kills (Rom. 6:23).

Luther never softens his descriptions of sin, but he is a master of what some call *haute vulgarisation*—the art of taking complex ideas and making them simple, making theological truth plainly accessible to ordinary people.

For example, many people in Luther's day (and in our own as well) had a hard time understanding God's condemnation of Adam; it was considered overly severe, so utterly permanent. Luther says: "Our Lord God is always in the wrong, no matter what He does. . . . God is said to have gone too far. On the other hand, God freely forgives all sins, even the crucifixion of His Son, provided men believe, and this is also regarded as going too far" (LW 54:105).

With an ear open to the piety of the pew, Luther speaks directly and with word-pictures that capture the hearers' imaginations. I especially appreciate his exquisite painting of a pre-fall planet. Luther wistfully conjectures back to Eden as "truly a golden age." In that time "before the fall, the sun's light was more beautiful and clearer," "the water purer, the trees more fruitful and the fields more fertile." Dogs even were more obedient. The sharpness of Adam's eyesight exceeded

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Luther links our mission as Christians with how we respond to our brothers and sisters in need. Today, we might find that need in Ghana (photo facing previous page), Haiti (below), Indonesia (right), or around the corner from our home.

the eagle's vision, his bodily strength surpassed the lion's or bear's, which he handled like we handle puppies. Luther sees no weeds, thorns, thistles, or even insects in this paradisiacal place. Certainly, neither infectious mosquitoes nor malaria. This is a temple for the entire world, a fresh creation flourishing in a problem-free environment,

to Luther: "We must utterly reject the opinion of those who maintain that only manual labor may be called work" (LW 1:211).

The Caribbean poet and Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott contemplates just one result: *Then after Eden, / was there one surprise? / O yes, the awe of Adam / at the first bead of sweat.*

ourselves charged with sin," he says. "All the fields, yes, almost the entire creation is full of such sermons" (LW 1:209).

The Creator, however, cannot forsake the creation. As Luther tells us in the Large Catechism's explanation of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed, God's mission remains invested in us, to bless us, and for our salvation:

He causes all created things to serve for the uses and necessities of life. These include the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens, day and night; air, fire, water, earth, and whatever it bears and produces. They include birds and fish, beasts, grain, and all kinds of produce. They also include whatever else there is for bodily and temporal goods, like good government, peace, and security. . . . all that we have, and whatever else is in heaven and upon earth, is daily given, preserved, and kept for us by God.

Like Adam, we discover ourselves squeezed into a world of limits, laden with a new load of toil and labor, anguished by a brokenness, anxiety, and estrangement from God deriving from at least four sources: (1) from *within* ourselves, (2) from *between* ourselves and *others*, (3) from the *natural realm* around us, (4) and directly from the *devil*.

No aspect of life escapes sin's poison. Hence, our mission: To convey to the world God's saving gift; that is, Holy Spirit-worked faith in Jesus' death and resurrection, which delivers the only antidote, the sole reconciling relationship that can fix what's broken, heal what's hurting, and forgive the many ways we've aggrieved God—including our disregard of our neighbor in need and our neglect of creation.

Often, during conferences or at speaking events, I will ask my audience to spend a few moments chatting about whether they think the world is getting better or worse. The answers usually blend a combination of positive and negative views. Luther himself registers a somewhat dismal view of the trajectory of humanity: "The closer the world is to its end, the worse human beings become," he opines (LW 1:216). Despite this seen, or unseen, downward



where life is truly *hakuna matata*—that Swahili phrase made famous in the musical *The Lion King*, meaning, "There are no worries."

Not only our human nature, but the entire created order, according to Luther, has entirely "succumbed" to this disastrous fall into sin. Every occupation and calling becomes difficult. Even people involved in "paper pushing," administrative tasks, and other non-manual labor, struggle, according

Suspended between Heaven and Earth

Everything is undone, unhinged, ruined: The earth is cursed. Rivers flow erratically and are filled with fewer fish. Above, skies have in them fewer birds. Weather is undependable. Seasons change. Predators attack. Crops fail. For Luther, the fields become pulpits, environmental evidence of sin's grip which preaches to us God's Law: "Not only in churches, therefore, do we hear



There is one failsafe harbor where the promises of God and the blessings of Jesus Christ are guaranteed to flow. The Church is the entranceway to this river of life.

slope, all the baptized are called to act as optimistic witnesses to God's grace in Jesus Christ.

Humanity on the Run

Luther's reflections on Genesis unveil the human person as rebellious yet imprinted with a noble drive to survive. Adam persists in sweat. He and his Eve are the first inhabitants of a fallen world. They had to do it all, Luther deduces, since the earth's population was so small. Adam was the proto-man, a "father, king, and priest." But humanity's first family fractures with sibling jealousy, inciting fratricide. Abel shows up dead (Gen. 4:8–11). Cain falls deeper, wandering rudderless without oar. He's left home, and his home has left him, banished to permanent wandering, to exile status, to being a fugitive: "And so, suspended, as it were, between

heaven and earth, he cannot settle permanently anywhere. The result is that he has neither a secure dwelling place nor a secure place of refuge" (LW 1:294).

What do you do then with people who have no place to run and no place to hide, no place to escape and no place to reside, neither tabernacle nor temple? So little has changed in the human condition to which we are in mission in 2010.

The Failsafe Harbor

There is one failsafe harbor where the promises of God and the blessings of Jesus Christ are guaranteed to flow. The Church is the entranceway to this river of life. We are custodians of the environment and advocates for all who suffer from the ravages of sin. We cherish God's world—even though it is now a thin reflection of the Garden's glory. But neither people living in poverty nor the natural world are the truest treasures we have. From the Wittenberg church door to our Facebook social media, the missional message of confessional Lutherans remains consistent: "The true treasure of the church is the most holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God" (LW 31:31). Motivated by God's glory and grace, we care for creation and the poor.

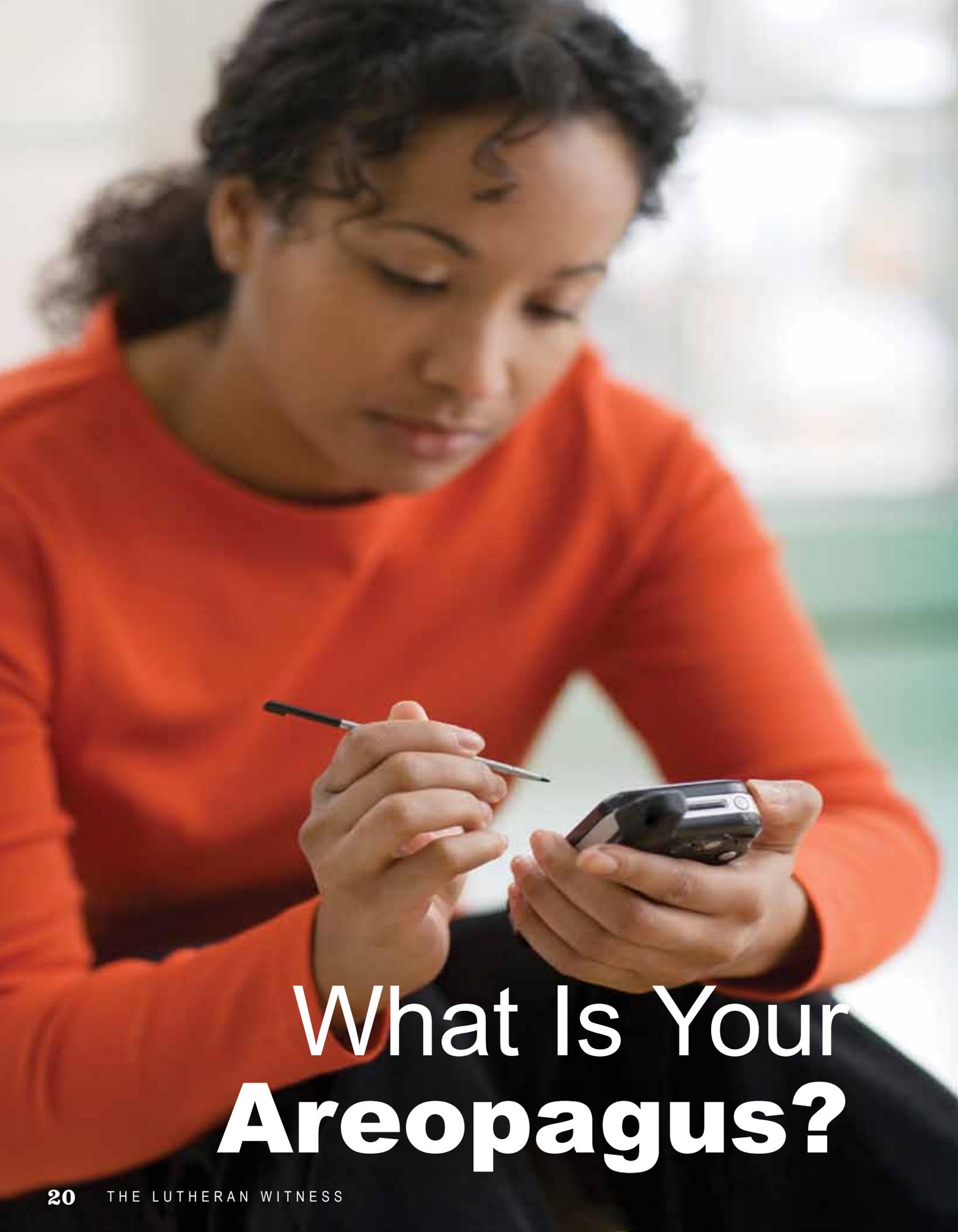
From the differently formed to the unborn without any opportunity

to ever form, Luther directly links our mission with how we live among the least, last, lost, and the left-behind in society. Embraced by God's grace, we embrace the human debris of our throwaway society as sister, brother, friend. Otherwise, warns Amos, our Divine Service sinks to the level of noise pollution (Amos 5:21–23). Our lives, like our liturgies, reach their zenith at the Table of the Lord, the hors d'oeuvres of restoration that anticipate the Day when justified sinners will be united forever with a holy God, that unending Day of ecological balance, of harmonious relationships, realizing Revelation 22's depiction of ethnic healing (not ethnic cleansing) and the accomplishment of all mission in God's perfected glory.



Rev. John Nunes (www.lwr.org) is president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief. He is the author of *Voices from the City: Issues and Images of Urban Preaching and It's All Good* (forthcoming from Concordia Publishing House).

The quotations from Luther's Works in this story are from the American Edition published by Fortress Press and Concordia Publishing House. Large Catechism quotations are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (pocket edition), published by CPH.



What Is Your **Areopagus?**

Recently, I met with some members of one of our congregations for a Q & A about a number of issues. It was a good dialog, just like one would hope for among children of God. There were differences of opinion and even disagreements, but all spoke with respect, kindness, and gentleness—the kind of thing that comes only from the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel.

One of the topics that arose was this: How do we reach out to, or start new outreach to, people who are not believers and who do not come to church?

There is some good scriptural teaching on this topic that we have to know well in order not to do the wrong things and not to condemn things that are good.

First, it's false doctrine to expect that unchurched unbelievers will come to church on their own. We read in 1 Cor. 12:3: "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except in the Holy Spirit" (ESV). Jesus said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (John 15:16). Paul wrote to believers regarding their lives before they came to faith: "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked" (Eph. 2:1). We confess in the Small Catechism: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel. . . ." Unbelievers do not choose to believe; they do not choose on their own to come and hear the Gospel. In order to believe, they must hear the Gospel, because "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

Unbelievers, then, will not, on their own, choose to come and hear the Gospel. We (the Church) must go to them. So don't expect your unbelieving, un-churched, un-baptized neighbors to wake up next Sunday morning and, on their own, say, "Hey! I think I'll go to church today!" That is as likely as a dead person saying, "Hey! I think I'll be alive now!" It's not going to happen.

So we (the Church) go to the unbelievers. We engage them in conversations about God's message of sin and forgiveness in His Son. We proclaim it to them, and we invite them to come and hear more of it.

And where do we go to do that?

A Scriptural Model

In Acts, we read how Paul and his companions usually went to a synagogue upon entering a new town. In Philippi, where there was no synagogue, they went to the river to find a place of prayer. But in neither case did they immediately set up a table, buy some bread and wine, say the Lord's words of institution and invite the people to the Lord's Supper. The people there weren't

yet believers in Jesus; so the Lord's Supper was properly closed to them. First, Paul and the others conversed about and proclaimed the message of salvation—always with the hope, prayer, and intent of bringing their hearers to the promises of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the Holy Spirit worked faith through the proclamation of the Good News.

One of my favorite models is Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16–34). Paul went both to the marketplace and to the Areopagus—places where people gathered for a number of things, including what we might call "just hanging out" to talk about stuff. And he talked with them about sin, grace, Jesus, the cross, and the resurrection. He did not conduct the Divine Service; he did not preside over and serve the Lord's Supper; he went to where people went to hang out, and he engaged them with the message of sin and the message of forgiveness in Jesus' name. Great!

A Question

Now here's the question for me, for you, for your congregation: "Where's your Areopagus?"

I'm not talking about a place in Asia or Africa, or in Europe or Latin America. I'm talking about right there in your community, in my community, in this post-Christian culture. That's not an easy question to answer, and I'm not giving you the answer. But I encourage you as an individual, and as a congregation, to ponder, discuss, pray about, and act upon it as the Lord leads. Since you cannot expect unbelievers to come to hear the Gospel on their own, where do you as a person, as a congregation, go to take the Gospel to them, or to invite them to come and hear it?

This is the question I posed to the congregation that day, and the one I'm posing to you, to all of us.

Through all your pondering and discussing, I encourage you to pray daily that the Lord will send workers into His harvest; that He will multiply new churches and new believers; and that He will add to our number daily those who are being saved.



Unbelievers . . . will not, on their own, choose to come and hear the Gospel. We (the Church) must go to them.



Rev. Dan P. Gilbert
(dan.gilbert@ni.lcms.org)
is president of the LCMS
Northern Illinois District.



Volunteers Are Not Free!

It's the beginning of a new year. It's an opportunity also to review how we employ—and treat—our volunteer staff.

Are church volunteers “free labor”? Of course they are.

By definition, volunteers perform a task without receiving payment for it. So we think of volunteers as free labor, the opposite of staff who are paid to work. When Sandra, the paid secretary, updates member addresses in the computer, there's a cost to the church. When Helen, a volunteer, does the same task, it's free.

Helen is a typical volunteer, serving from her heart, out of love for her Savior and love for her church. She isn't seeking payment or any other compensation. She'd tell you she doesn't want acknowledgement, or even a thank you.

But Helen has some needs, whether she realizes it or not. They are the same needs any of us have when we perform a task for someone else, whether we're an employee or a volunteer, whether we're working in an office, at church, or at home. These needs cost the person we're working for something, a cost that is not measured in dollars and cents. What are these needs? What do they cost? Let's see . . .

Some Basic Questions

“What do I do?” When someone asked Helen to update those addresses, Helen immediately got a picture of the task in her mind. Was it the same as the picture in the mind of the person who asked Helen? If Helen finds out later that things are far different than she pictured (“In the computer *and* in the paper files? Sitting way over there?

Using *that* machine?”), it affects her attitude toward the task and particularly toward any future volunteering. If the person asking Helen sat down with her for an in-depth conversation and gave her a written job description, Helen would know what she's being asked to do—before she accepts.

“Is this right for me?” Some people serve wherever needed because they want to be helpful. Some have trouble saying no, and will do most anything they're asked to. Both types are frequently asked to do just about anything at church. At times, we all just pitch in and do whatever needs doing. But we're happier, and the results of our work are better, when a job matches our abilities, interests, and even our personality. An introvert might love entering data in an out-of-the-way corner, but it would torture an extrovert. When recruiting, don't settle for anyone with a pulse. Take the time to seek people whose gifts match the task.

“Do I have the tools I need?” Helen wants to do her job well. But the person who showed Helen what to do was in a hurry, giving Helen a quick explanation and figuring she'd ask if she had questions. Helen hates to bother people. So she muddles through, wondering if she's doing it right. When she finishes for the day, her eyes are sore and her back hurts because she was using an antiquated computer monitor on a card table with a folding chair. The office staff is irritated because Helen isn't updating the addresses the right way. But they don't say anything, because Helen is “just a volunteer.” Intentional training gives Helen the information, methods, and equipment she needs, including an adequate

computer, desk, and chair. It spells out expectations, allows her to try her hand at the job, and encourages her to ask questions. Helen is confident, and so is the staff, because the task is done as it needs to be done.

“Am I on my own?” Even with good training, Helen will likely have questions or encounter problems along the way. When someone makes a point of periodically asking Helen, “How is it going?” Helen knows someone cares and is available. With ongoing support, small problems are uncovered and solved. Unmentioned, those problems grow and often become the reason a volunteer quits. And no one knows why.

“With whom do I work?” Few tasks are done entirely alone. Good relationships are vital to a good volunteer experience. If Helen associates the computer updating task with boring solitude or unpleasant people, it will be difficult for her to continue. But if she has a good time with great people while she works, updating addresses will be a highlight of her week.

“Does it matter?” Helen knows her church needs updated records. And she doesn’t need a thank you. But when she receives a note of appreciation, she smiles as she reads it, and she saves it. She is touched when Pastor stops by her desk to tell her how her timely update saved him from driving out to the wrong end of town when he visited the Anderson family. And she’s energized when the secretary shows Helen how she’s able to do more for the church in her job because Helen and others are helping with routine tasks. Why give time and energy to something with no significance? Reminding church volunteers of the significance of their task, how it supports the church’s mission, and the concrete ways it benefits others, touches the core of why they are working. Many people go through life without being told that their contributions make a difference.

Counting the Costs

The costs of meeting these needs are measured in intention, planning, time, and energy rather than in dollars and cents, but they are real costs nevertheless. What is the cost when we ignore these needs? When we treat all our Helens (and Harolds) as “free labor,” we diminish their capacity to serve, we reduce their joy in serving, and many of them will simply stop serving. Worse yet, we’ll diminish our church’s capacity to be our Savior’s hands and feet, to love and serve each other and our community.

Who then gives all this time and energy? Who does all this training, supporting, and affirming? Our already-overwhelmed pastor and staff?

Staff members need to guard against the natural tendency of the urgent overrunning the important. The fullest answer lies in the beauty of the Church as the body of Christ. St. Paul reminds us that in the body, “[its] members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor. 12:25b ESV), and we are “individually members one of another” (Rom. 12:5b NASB). All of us in the body can help other parts serve. Then, we will “grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:15–16 ESV).



Karen Kogler is director of volunteer equipping at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Arlington Heights, Ill., and manages a Web site, www.TheEquipper.org, for helping churches equip the saints for service.

Resources for Supporting Church Volunteers

Here is a list of resources I have found useful. You might find them useful, too. The list includes the Web site I manage.

Books

- ***Servant Leadership*** by Dr. Jane L. Fryar, CPH, 2001. Encourages church professionals and lay leaders to develop servant leadership traits in order to improve day-to-day ministry.
- ***Trust and Teams***, also by Jane Fryar, CPH, 2002. Helps leaders in congregations understand the role of servant leadership in establishing boundaries and responsibilities in a team environment.
- ***Me to We: A Pastor’s Discovery of the Power of Partnership*** by Alan Nelson, Group Publishing, 2007. A story of how church workers can avoid burnout by involving others in ministry.
- ***Simply Strategic Volunteers*** by Tony Morgan and Tim Stevens, Group Publishing, 2005. A book of 99 bite-size practical ideas.
- ***The Equipping Church*** by Sue Mallory with accompanying *The Equipping Church Guidebook* by Sue Mallory and Brad Smith, Zondervan, 2001. A comprehensive look at the whole-church picture.

Web Sites

- **The “Equipper Church Volunteerism Resources”** at www.TheEquipper.org is a collection of other articles and resources by the author.
- **Energize, Inc.**, at www.energizeinc.com, is about volunteerism in all kinds of organizations. Resources in their library and store include items pertaining to faith-based volunteering.
- **Church Volunteer Central** (<http://www.churchvolunteercentral.com>) is a subscription-based resource Web site.

—K.K.

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

WILLIAM W. HOFMAN, Fort Wayne, Ind., resigned from the Ministers of Religion—Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, effective Nov. 2, 2009. He is, therefore, no longer eligible for a call.—Dr. Daniel P. May, President, LCMS Indiana District.

REV. ERWIN HUTTER, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Taylor, Mich., was appointed circuit counselor of Circuit 3—Down River Circuit, replacing REV. RANDY JOHNSON, who accepted a call outside the circuit.—Rev. David P.E. Maier, President, LCMS Michigan District.

PRINCE OF PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Glen Allen, Va., has dissolved, effective Nov. 7, 2009, and was removed from the Congregation roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.—Dr. Jon T. Diefenthaler, President, LCMS Southeastern District.

Official Notices— Colloquies

TIMOTHY M. FAILE, Fort Wayne, Ind.; RICHARD J. NIEBANCK, Delhi, N.Y.; and SHAUN M.

DAUGHERTY, The Colony, Texas, have submitted their applications for the Pastoral Colloquy Program through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Correspondence regarding their applications should be directed within four weeks after publication of this notice to Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

DAVID W. LOCHMANN, Washington, Mo.; REBECCA L. MOTT, Rocheport, Mo.; PHILIP P. WARGO, Sterling Heights, Mich.; MATTHEW A. CAHILL, Maspeth, N.Y.; and JONATHAN LARSON, Orange, Calif., have submitted their applications for the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through *CUEnet*. Correspondence regarding their applications should be directed within four weeks after publication of this notice to Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

AARON P. JANSEN, Walkersville, Md., has submitted an application for the Director of Parish Music Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn. WILLIAM R. BRUSICK, The Woodlands, Texas, has submitted an application for the Director of Parish Music Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through Concordia University, River Forest, Ill. Correspondence regarding their applications should be directed within four weeks after publication of this notice to Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

BOBBETTE LOFTON, Long Beach, 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, Colloquy Program, Concordia University, Irvine, 1530 Concordia West, Irvine, CA 92612-3203.

JONATHAN P. GURGEL, Brown Deer, Wis.; and SARAH E. BATEMAN, Oak Creek, Wis., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Rev. John W. Oberdeck, Ph.D., Assistant Director of Lay Ministry/Teacher Colloquy Program, Concordia University Wisconsin, 12800 N. Lake Shore Drive, Mequon, WI 53097-2418.

BRYAN OECHSNER, Clinton Township, Mich., has completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call. RICHARD GRUNEWALD, Clinton Township, Mich., has completed all requirements of the Family Life Colloquy Program and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dennis Genig, Dean, School of Education, Concordia University, Ann Arbor, 4090 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2797.

NICOLE HAYENGA, Crystal, Minn., has completed the Director of Christian Education Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call. SUSAN NASH, Wykoff, Minn., has completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Stephen C. Stohlmann, Director of Colloquy, Concordia University, St. Paul, 275 Syndicate St. N., St. Paul, MN 55104.

SCHEERY RENKEN-GOEKLER, Oklahoma City, Okla., has completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible to receive

a call.—Brian L. Friedrich, President and CEO, Concordia University, Seward, 800 N. Columbia Ave., Seward, NE 68434-1599.

KARLA BALDUC, Crown of Life Lutheran School, Colleyville, Texas; and KATHRYN LANG, St. Paul Lutheran School, McAllen, Texas, have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible for a call.—Dr. Jim McConnell, Assistant Colloquy Program Director, Concordia University Texas, 11400 Concordia University Drive, Austin, TX 78726.

Official Notices—Requests for Reinstatement

GARY WILLIAM PHELPS, Nashville, Tenn., has applied for reinstatement to the Ministers of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. TEDDY MAX BOETTCHER, Wichita, Kan.; DAVID PAUL BURGDORF, Palatine, Ill.; LA RUTH CASTENS, Wichita, Kan.; and HANNAH L. PETERSEN, Ringle, Wis., have applied for reinstatement to the Ministers 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.

Official Notices—Notice of Nondiscrimination

The colleges, universities, and seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod admit students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the college, university, or seminary. While the colleges and seminaries of the Synod give preference to members of the Lutheran faith, they do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of their educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other college or seminary administered programs. The colleges and seminaries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Concordia University Texas, Austin, Texas; Concordia College, Bronxville, N.Y.; Concordia University, Irvine, Calif.; Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis.; Concordia University, Portland, Ore.; Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Ill.; Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn.; Concordia College, Selma, Ala.; Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Neb.; Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.; and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

Call for Nominations/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 Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation seeks applicants for the position of **senior vice president, Marketing/Communications Services**. This position is responsible for directing and managing the overall product creation, implementation, production, assignments,

and evaluation of all Direct Mail, Telecare, and Internet fundraising programs of the national ministries and marketing of the LCMS Foundation.

The senior vice president also is responsible for negotiating, directing, and supervising outside vendors, their contracts, and production quality. Other responsibilities include directing the development and updates of the Foundation's Web site and the LCMS Giving Catalog.

The senior vice president is in charge of maintaining relationships associated with the implementation of Direct Response, Internet, and Telecare fund-raising programs for all the Foundation's constituencies.

Position requirements include:

- Active member of an LCMS congregation; familiar with the Synod structure and organizations.
- Faithful to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and supportive of the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws, and policies.
- Ability to provide practical application of stewardship principles.
- Bachelor's degree in an appropriate discipline.
- Five or more years experience in the production of Direct Mail accounts.

- Knowledge and experience in negotiating, coordinating, and utilizing outside vendors contracts and monitoring their production.
- Ability to plan, organize, execute, and evaluate programs, as well as make positive recommendations for improvement and new approaches to the development tasks.
- Ability to function on a management team that emphasizes results and measurable accountability.
- Adept at oral, written, and graphic communication skills; high proficiency in computer design work.
- Specific and extensive experience in one or more areas of development activity.

For more information, or to be considered for this position, candidates should e-mail resume and salary information to Brenda.Haverty@lcms.org; or fax to 314-996-1121; or mail to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Human Resources, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295. The contact telephone number is 314-996-1368 or 800-248-1930, ext. 1368. An LCMS “Application for Employment” can be accessed via the link below: <http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/LCMS/application.pdf>.

The Board of Governors of the **International Lutheran Laymen’s League** and the executive director for **Lutheran Hour Ministries** invite applicants and nominations for the position of **speaker of The Lutheran Hour**®. The speaker must be a person with a passion for reaching the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and will be responsible for the preparation and delivery of Christ-centered messages through broadcast media and speaking engagements. The speaker must have a shepherd’s heart for relating and connecting with many fine people who view Lutheran Hour Ministries as an extension of their own ministry, and should be receptive to the expanding possibilities that media and technology offer in “Bringing Christ to the Nations—and the Nations to the Church.” Visit www.lutheranhour.org. The job description may be viewed in detail at www.lhm.org/thspeaker.htm.

Candidate must be an ordained clergy member of either The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or Lutheran Church—Canada who desires to speak boldly of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. The successful candidate will have strong communication skills in writing and speaking, enjoy relating to individuals and groups, have experience in or be willing to learn media production and media interviews, and be able to travel.

Applications and nominations will be accepted until March 31. If interested, submit a resume with cover letter and salary history to Jackie O’Guin, Human Resources, Lutheran Hour Ministries, 660 Mason Ridge Center Drive, St. Louis, MO 63141; e-mail LHMjobs@lhm.org; fax: 314-317-4291.

Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT), Aurora, Ill., seeks an experienced, eager **major gifts officer** to immediately start building and growing its major gifts initiative to further expand and better help its ministries, programs, and missionary teams; and to strengthen long-term financial support.

The ideal LBT fund-raising candidate will be a self-starter who demonstrates initiative, has five-plus years experience identifying and developing donors, and closing gifts in the five- to-six-figure range. A planned-giving background, degree/certification, moves-management platform experience, leadership/communications/speaking/computer skills, and the ability to travel frequently are all very important qualifications. Salary is negotiable.

Submit cover letter with salary history and resume soon but no later than Jan. 30 to dmehl@lbt.org; or Dean Mehl, Human Resources Manager, Lutheran Bible Translators, 303 N. Lake St., Aurora, IL 60507. Visit www.lbt.org.

The following institutions of the **Concordia University System (CUS)** are seeking candidates for positions described below:

Concordia University, Portland, Ore., seeks to fill the following faculty position: **Chemistry**.

Concordia University Nebraska, Newark, Neb., seeks to fill the following position: **Director of Athletics**.

Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn., seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **Teacher Education/Graduate Studies, Teacher Education/Special Education, Biology**.

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.”

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.*

Trinity, Phillips, Wis., will celebrate its 125th anniversary at the 8:30 a.m. service July 4 with guest speakers, followed by a brunch and program of celebration. Open house will be at the church from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. July 3. Contact the church office at 715-339-3495 or trin Zion@pctnet.net.

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

CLEMENTS, WILLIAM KARL, Jan. 13, 1950, Baltimore, Md., to Aug. 30, 2009, Mercer Island, Wash.; son of Louis and Minnie Clements; graduated St. Louis, 1976. Served 1976–2009. Ministries/parishes: Villa Park, Matteson, Ill.; Puyallup, Mercer Island, Wash. Survivors: Susan (Haushild) Clements; son: Karl; daughter: Amanda Duvall. Funeral: Sept. 5, 2009, Mercer Island, Wash.; cremation.

JOHNSON, ROBERT RUDOLPH, Jan. 15, 1929, Milwaukee, Wis., to Oct. 7, 2009, Bellevue, Wash.; son of Carl and Virginia (Taylor) Johnson; colloquy 2004. Joined LCMS as Emeritus in 2005. Survivors: Barbara (Hafner) Johnson; sons: Timothy, Michael; daughters: Virginia, Christine Jackson. Funeral: Oct. 18, 2009, Bellevue, Wash.; interment: Oct. 19, 2009, Bellevue, Wash.

KRENNING, WILLIAM, Feb. 20, 1931, St. Louis, Mo., to Sept. 14, 2009, Federal Way, Wash.; son of William and Lydia (Schneider) Krenning; graduated St. Louis, 1956. Served 1956–1997. Ministries/parishes: Pasadena, Texas; Marquette Heights, Ill.; Universal, Pa.; Kansas City, Mo.; Seattle, Washougal, Wash.; retired 1997. Survivors: Lois (Leininger) Krenning; sons: David, Jonathan; daughter: Rebecca Sayers. Funeral: Sept. 21, 2009, Federal Way, Wash.; interment: Sept. 21, 2009, SeaTac, Wash.

KOVAC, WALTER JOHN, March 1, 1937, Emporia, Va., to Sept. 17, 2009, Parma, Ohio; son of Rev. John and Ann (Lamds) Kovac; graduated St. Louis, 1961. Served 1961–2002. Ministries/parishes: Aurora, Ontario, Canada; Newark, N.Y.; Cleveland, North Ridgeville, Ohio; retired 2002. Survivors: Hilda (Philipp) Kovac; son: Paul; daughter: Kimberly Clark. Memorial service: Sept. 21, 2009, Fairview Park, Ohio.

MUELLER, HOWARD EUGENE, June 10, 1916, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, to Sept. 11, 2009, St. Louis, Mo.; son of Rev. August and Julia (Borchardt) Mueller; graduated St. Louis, 1940. Served 1942–1982. Ministries/parishes: Lyons, Ottawa, Topeka, Kansas City, Kan.; St. Louis, Mo.; retired 1982. Preceded in death by his wife, Louise (Peiman) Mueller. Survivors: sons: Robert, Leslie, Steven. Memorial service: Sept. 22, 2009, Webster Groves, Mo.; cremation.

MUELLER, WILLIARD EUGENE, July 9, 1930, Topeka, Kan., to Aug. 14, 2009, Hickory, N.C.; son of Rev. Theodore and Meta (Ehlers) Mueller; graduated St. Louis, 1955. Served 1955–1990; 1991–2000. Ministries/parishes: Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Hoyleton, Alton, Ill.; West Columbia, S.C.; Hickory, N.C.; retired 2000. Survivors: Gloria (Dierker) Mueller; sons: Stephen, Michael, Jonathan. Funeral and interment: Aug. 18, 2009, Hickory, N.C.

WAHLERS, LORENZ FRANK KARL, Sept. 21, 1913, Greensboro, N.C., to Oct. 31, 2009, Webster Groves, Mo.; son of Rev. Fred and Emma (Schwieger) Wahlers; graduated St. Louis, 1937. Served 1937–1978. Ministries/parishes: Winfield, Kan.; Bronville, N.Y.; Concordia, Warrensburg, St. Louis, Mo.; retired 1978. Survivors: Alice (Solum) Wahlers; son: Lorenz Jr.; daughter: Margery Barthel. Memorial service: Nov. 21, 2009, Webster Groves, Mo.

WONG, HENRY B., Nov. 6, 1921, Brooklyn, N.Y., to Sept. 17, 2009, Clackamas, Ore.; son of Ben and Jean (Ng Shee) Wong; graduated Springfield, 1960. Served 1960–1969; 1972–1987. Ministries/parishes: Lakeview, Oak Grove, Cottage Grove, Clackamas, Ore.; Klickitat, Wash.; retired 1987. Preceded in death by his wife, Ruth (Gray) Wong. Survivors: sons: Jonathan, James, Paul; daughters: Eunice Garrett, Michal.

COMMISSIONED

HENDERSON, STEVEN WILLIAM, June 30, 1952, N.D., to July 31, 2009, Waukesha, Wis.; son of William and Elaine (Anderson) Henderson; colloquy 2005. Served 2007–2009. Schools/parishes: St. Paul, Minn.; Portland, Ore. Survivors: Vicci (Ruthenbeck) Henderson; son: Andrew; daughters: Erin Biak, Amy. Funeral: Aug. 15, 2009, Lincoln City, Ore.; cremation.

KRAMER, STANLEY J., Aug. 13, 1940, Fort Wayne, Ind., to Aug. 23, 2009, Manhasset, N.Y.; son of E. Howard and Elizabeth (Birdwell) Kramer; graduated River Forest, 1962. Served 1962–2009. Schools/parishes: Hicksville, Bronxville, N.Y. Survivors: Jane (Klitzing) Kramer; sons: Drew, Nathan, Gregory, James. Memorial service: Aug. 25, 2009, Hicksville, N.Y.

ROSENKOTTER, ARTHUR H., Nov. 1, 1927, Grand Island, Neb., to June 2, 2009, Mountain Home, Ark.; son of Henry and Esther (Nolting) Rosenkotter; graduated Milwaukee, 1964. Served 1964–1993. Schools/parishes: Alton, Ill.; Callaway, Arnold, Scribner, Neb.; Mountain Home, Ark.; retired 1993. Survivors: Vesta Rosenkotter; son: Kevin; daughters: Marjorie, Anita Kreienkamp. Funeral: June 6, 2009, Mountain Home, Ark.; cremation.

WARNEKE, ALLARD D., Aug. 25, 1940, Pierce, Neb., to Sept. 1, 2009, Columbus, Neb.; son of Martin and Pearl (Brummels) Warneke; graduated Seward, 1961. Served 1961–2003. Schools/parishes: Ogallala, Hastings, Neb.; Fort Smith, Ark.; retired 2003. Survivors: Janice (Huseman) Warneke; son: Kevin; daughters: Julie, Jeana Buhman. Funeral: Sept. 4, 2009, Hastings, Neb.; interment: Sept. 4, 2009, Norfolk, Neb.

FARRELLY, JAMES JEROME, Jan. 28, 1934, Dovrey, Minn., to Oct. 16, 2009, Sheboygan, Wis.; son of William and Mary Farrelly; graduated Milwaukee, 1963. Served 1963–2009. Schools/ministries: Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Wis.; retired 2009. Survivors: Marlys (Neissess) Farrelly; sons: John, Paul; daughters: Karen Immel, Christine Simpson. Funeral and interment: Oct. 20, 2009, Sheboygan, Wis.

Sadness and the Seasons



I have lived in the upper Midwest all my life but have always dreaded the winters. The gloomy weather depresses me. Do other people have this problem, or is it just me?

All of us are affected by our natural environment, and our bodies seem to be especially sensitive to weather conditions. Sunlight can lift our spirits. Conversely, a rainy or snowy day can make us feel gloomy. Normally, mild changes in mood do not affect our ability to cope with daily life. For others, however, such seasonal changes

bring about a type of depression that can have a more serious impact on daily functioning. What you are describing might be this kind of depression, also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). While research into SAD is ongoing, researchers believe its causes are related, among other things, to how the lack of sunlight affects our brain's pineal gland. Another component of the disorder is related to seasonal variations in our brain's "internal clock," which regulates our sleep rhythm.

First, I recommend that you see your physician to determine whether or not you have this condition. Second, be aware of how the onset of winter affects you, and plan accordingly. Such a strategy might include activities that raise your spirits, such as exercising, reading a good book, or planning an evening with friends. I find that my spirits

are lifted just by being around my grandchildren. People with SAD often find that spending time in a sunnier location brings relief from symptoms. If this is not a feasible option, spending more time outdoors during the day and arranging your environment to maximize exposure to sunlight is often helpful. For example, trim tree branches that block light, and keep curtains open during the day. Doctors have found that many people with SAD respond well to exposure to bright artificial light. This involves sitting beside a special light box for a prescribed amount of time each day. However, you should consult your doctor before beginning light therapy.

Reading Scripture and praying are always good "remedies" for God's people. Unfortunately, depression can deplete one's motivation to reach out for such help. You might begin by reading a brief portion of the Bible daily, followed by prayer. The Psalms are an especially rich source of comfort and encouragement. Finally, you have a valuable resource in your pastor. Because your church is in a northern climate, he may have experience helping other members with similar symptoms.

Dr. Leslie (Jack) Fyans is a clinical psychologist and member of the Ministerial Health Committee of the LCMS Central Illinois District.

Send your questions to Family Counselor, *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to lutheran.witness@lcms.org. Please include your name and address. While we look for questions that have broad interest among our readers, no question is unimportant. Unfortunately, the volume of questions we receive makes it impossible to answer every question individually.

SHEDDING SOME LIGHT

Say What?

Leaving church one Sunday morning not long ago, my niece and her husband asked Kiera, their 3-year-old daughter, what she had learned in Sunday School.

"Jesus was boring," she responded proudly.

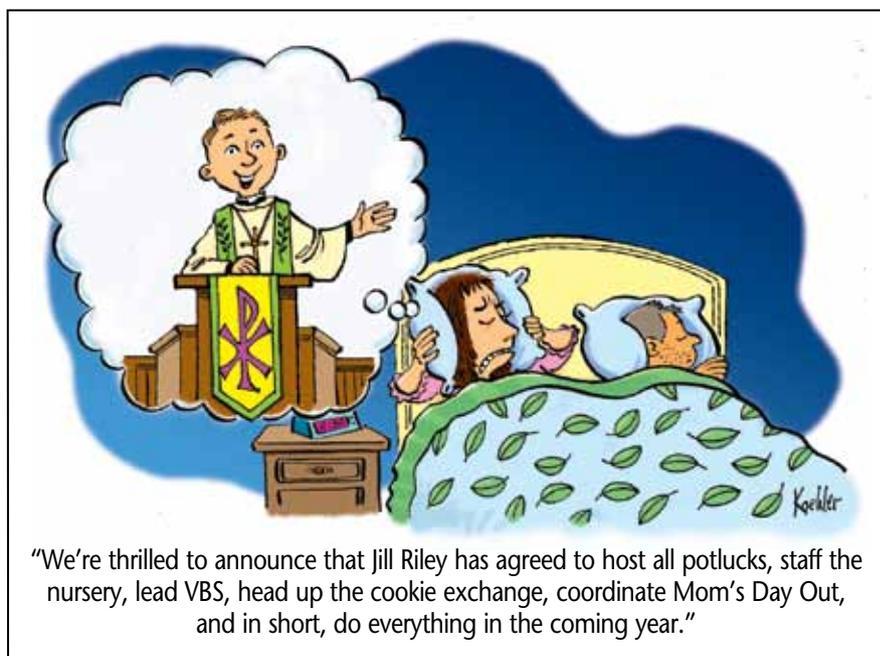
Relieved she wasn't overheard by someone, they proceeded straight to their van.

Once again, Mom and Dad asked the question: "What did you learn today in Sunday School, Kiera?"

Miffed at having to answer the question again, Kiera stated firmly: "Jesus was boring in a stable!"

Needless to say, after a suppressed laugh, the next item was an explanation of the difference between the words *born* and *boring*.

**Vivian Frasch
Butte, Neb.**



Epiphany

(A Message for a Post-Church Culture)

The Celestial Surgeon

*If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning
face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning
skies,
Books, and my food, and summer
rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in
vain;
Lord, Your most pointed pleasure
take
And stab my spirit broad awake.*
Robert Louis Stevenson

O Little Town of Bethlehem

*Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.*
Phillips Brooks

Countless people attend thousands of AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings. Common phrases are repeated. One such phrase, “Attraction verses Promotion,” indicates how newcomers are drawn to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

“Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him” (Matt. 2:2 ESV).

Read Matt. 2:1–12. Who were these visitors to Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus?

What did they bring?

Where did they come from?

When did their search conclude?

Why didn’t they stay longer?

A degree of mystery surrounds the Wise Men, the Magi. They were students, seekers, and thinkers. They have been called kings. They were from a distant land, some say Persia. The number who made the trip is assumed to be three because of the number of gifts identified: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They brought “not only great gifts but the dust of a thousand miles” (Kent R. Hughes). In other words, they brought their lives. Legend has named them Balthazar, Melchior, and Caspar. They were drawn to the Savior of the world at a complicated, convoluted, and confusing time. They did not have GPS. A star of grace directed them and gave them hope on their journey. They were drawn to the Savior of the world much like the prodigal son was drawn back home in Luke 15.

The Magi, I suspect, had “hopes and fears” much like you and me. They might have had spirits in need of being “stabbed awake.”

Folks dealing with addictions, or even educated men and women in a culture’s grandest settings—the Magi of society—regularly reach “life moments” when the spirit becomes dull, dusty, lifeless. People collide with unmet hopes and gnawing fears. We, too, travel from distant

places, drawn by a star of mercy, directing us to hope, to Jesus. There is no place so dark, so dusty, so distant, that the Epiphany star cannot reach it.

To have an “epiphany” means to make a discovery, to have an “aha” moment that can change your life.

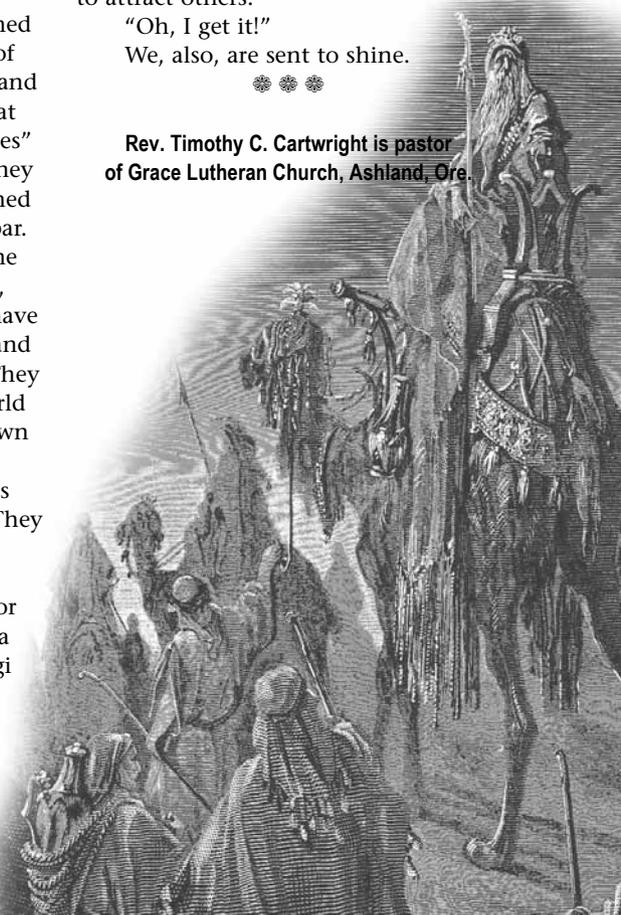
The Magi’s epiphany: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Why didn’t the Magi stay longer? Jesus had drawn them unto Himself (John 12:32). The brilliant light of the world illumined a dark place (John 1:5). The encounter of the Magi with the Savior of the world transformed their lives. They were sent back home to shine (Matt. 5:16 and Phil. 2:15), to attract others.

“Oh, I get it!”
We, also, are sent to shine.



Rev. Timothy C. Cartwright is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Ashland, Ore.





A Great Treasure

How meaningful is the Lord's Supper to you? One of the articles in this issue of *The Lutheran Witness* focuses on Martin Luther and makes reference to the Large Catechism. Not very long ago, in my own study and reflection time, I reread portions

of the Large Catechism that address the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar. While I had previously read this material numerous times, I was once again moved by the many facets of this precious gift of God that our good friend Martin Luther shows us.

For example, Luther discusses the *power and benefit* of the Lord's Supper. Here is some of what he says in the Large Catechism:

"Now we come to its power and benefit, the purpose for which the Sacrament was really instituted, for it is most necessary that we know what we should seek and obtain there. This is plainly evident from the words . . . , 'This is My body and blood, given and poured out *for you* for the forgiveness of sins.' In other words, we go to the Sacrament because we receive there a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins."

A very specific memory comes to my mind in this regard. It goes all the way back to my experience as a brand-new eighth-grade confirmand at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Houston, Texas.

The practice at my home church was for confirmation to be held on Palm Sunday, with first communion for the new confirmands to follow on Maundy Thursday. When the evening came for my class to receive the Sacrament for the very first time, joy was not the emotion I was experiencing. My clear recollection from my catechetical instruction was that I had better be absolutely certain that I was worthy and well prepared before walking down the aisle to the communion rail. So I approached the table of the Lord with fear and trembling, concerned and worried that I might not be adequately prepared or worthy. Adding to my concern and worry was the fact that my pastor had emphasized the possibility that an unworthy communicant could receive the Sacrament to his or her damnation.

Rather than the joy of forgiveness and the assurance of life and salvation, I focused on the fear factor of possible eternal perdition.

All this angst had come from my pastor's strong emphasis on the apostle Paul's words to the Corinthians: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh *damnation* to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. 11:27–30 KJV, emphasis mine).

My fears were exacerbated, if not initiated, by the translation of the word "damnation" in the King James Version, the one we used in our confirmation class. No other version of Scripture translates that word as "damnation." All later translations are more faithful to the Greek in translating that word as "judgment." The English Standard Version (ESV), for example, translates this sentence as follows: "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks *judgment* on himself" (v. 29, emphasis mine). Verse 30 describes what that judgment is about, namely, weakness, sickness, and even death. But even in that temporal judgment, God spares the unworthy communicant from eternal condemnation: "But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32 ESV).

Fortunately, I did not remain in my state of fear and trembling. I came to understand that the Sacrament is for penitent *simmers* who desire the blessings that God offers through the body and blood of Christ—namely, the forgiveness of sins.

We also have come to understand through this and other texts that to commune in an unworthy manner means not realizing that Christ's true body and blood are present in, with, and under the bread and wine; not desiring the forgiveness offered in the holy meal; not reconciling existing sinful offense; not dealing with unrepentant sin; and/or creating divisions in the body of Christ.

I have come . . . to cherish the words, "This is My body and blood, given and poured out *for you* for the forgiveness of sins."

We approach the altar as penitent children of God, knowing that by His grace, He grants us forgiveness, life, and salvation through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. And so I have come joyfully and thankfully to cherish the words, "This is My body and blood, given and poured out *for you* for the forgiveness of sins."

As Luther writes, "we go to the Sacrament because we receive there a great treasure, through and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins."

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