



THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

VOL. 129 NO. 3 MARCH 2010

Living the Great Commission

**RECEIVING
CONSOLATION**

**2010 MARCH
FOR LIFE**

A HAITI UPDATE

lcms.org/witness



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.

To the Reader

By the time you pick up this issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, the story that has dominated the news for the past two months, the terrible earthquake in Haiti, will likely have begun to recede from the headlines. Yet, the need for help remains great, and it will be years before the people of Haiti recover from the destruction wrought by this disaster—destruction Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC), calls “simply incomprehensible” when it is seen firsthand, as he and other members of LCMS disaster-response and Mercy Medical Teams have done.

In this issue, *Lutheran Witness* editor-at-large and LCMS WR-HC writer Kim Plummer Krull provides an update on our efforts in Haiti. She notes also that LCMS director of disaster response Rev. Glenn Merritt says the situation remains too unstable for volunteers other than medical professionals. He asks that potential volunteers provide their contact information so they can be alerted when they are needed in the future. (For more information about this, visit lcms.org/?16430.)

The best way to help suffering Haitians and share Christ’s mercy, our ministry leaders say, remains to make a financial gift:

- Online at givenowlcms.org.
- Toll-free 888-930-4438.
- By mail with a check made out to
LCMS World Relief and Human Care
P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861.

Note “Haiti earthquake relief” in the memo line.

Elsewhere in this issue—and on our cover—we celebrate Lutheran Schools Week March 7–13 through Lois Engfehr’s inviting profile of Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis, Ill. Also, we offer an insightful perspective on the benefit of private confession and absolution, and we recap our Synod’s participation in the 37th annual March for Life Jan. 22. Online this month at lcms.org/witness, you will find more background information about our efforts in Haiti.

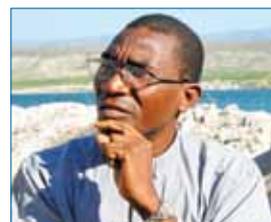
We pray you find this issue informative and beneficial. For ourselves, we have learned much in preparing it.

James H. Heine, Executive Editor
The Lutheran Witness
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My Lesson from Kindergarten

I've never been one to memorize Bible verses. Yet, I've always admired people who, no matter what the topic, could pull a pertinent Bible verse out of their memory, quoting chapter and verse. I've always wondered about their accuracy, too, but have nonetheless been impressed. I learned the big ones when I was a child: John 3:16 and Psalm 23. Those had gotten me by for a good long time when God thought I needed to add to my collection.

Enter my oldest son's public-school kindergarten teacher. She would merely write Phil. 4:13 under her signature on notes home from school. I thought there was probably someone at the school who would say something about this, since I heard they'd kicked God out long ago. But no one ever did, and finally one night I looked it up.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.—Phil. 4:13 ESV



It was true that Christ gave her immeasurable strength to face 25 kindergartners every day from August through May. I cannot imagine that I would be so strong in this situation. She played the piano, taught them countless songs, read them her favorite books, impressed upon them their numbers and colors, kept the peace, wiped noses, battled parents, and put up with this crazy mother. She must have truly had Jesus on her side to make it through the year.

And yet, this was her 17th year of teaching. What makes someone want to walk into a class-

room every day and cover the very, very basics of academia over and over again? It is hard to extrapolate on a subject when your audience is more interested in bodily functions than their daily coursework. It is nearly impossible to cover the ABCs and 123s when half the class has the giggles just because. And it is insurmountable to imagine that these children will, through their three months of summer break, retain even a fraction of the wisdom she so diligently impressed upon them daily. Yet, she pressed on.

Sure enough, not one child flunked kindergarten that year. Everyone moved to the next level. And she cried. Her work was done, if only for a brief time before starting over on a new set of rambunctious 5-year-olds with crazy parents.

And so, in my doldrums of everyday life, I try to remember the enthusiasm one person held for each one of her wards and her faith that Jesus was right behind her every step of the way. I may not play the piano, sing songs, or even keep the peace very well, but through Jesus I have immeasurable strength just like the teacher in charge of a class of 25 each day. It is hard to see my two boys as devout church-goers when sometimes it seems they're only in it for the donuts. It may be nearly impossible to think that my wily boys who play ball in the church gym when they shouldn't will someday be godly men. And it is insurmountable to think that the Sunday School lessons that I so diligently try to impress upon them will carry them through the hard times in their lives. And yet I press on, knowing by rote God's support of my endeavors through this one short verse. Thanks be to God for giving me unfailing strength no matter what the task at hand, and thanks to one kindergarten teacher for giving me the verse that reminds me.

Mickie Dessiatova is a member of Faith Lutheran Church, Owasso, Okla.



LETTERS

Engaging the world around us

While I normally read most of *The Lutheran Witness* each month, the January issue was especially revealing of the rich treasures with which our Lord has entrusted this church body. From the familiar voice of Rev. Mueller, my own district president, to the review of something I heard in person last year (when Dr. Newton addressed International Student Ministry workers), to the on-target eloquence of Rev. Nunes, this issue is a keeper. May the depth and breadth of theology in these pages guide us in carrying out the mission we have been given.

Indeed, the world *needs* the Lutheran witness—and I don't mean (primarily) your publication.

*Rev. Eric Wood
Carbondale, Ill.*

I believe the January 2010 issue of *The Lutheran Witness* was the best ever. Great articles and very practical for ministry. It also looked great.

However, I could have lived without the "Zip, Zap, Zoom" wrap-around.

I find it interesting that none of the articles in the January issue on post-church culture is from a pastor serving a congregation. Such inclusion might offer a more hopeful outlook.

For example, I recently served a year-long outreach contract for a congregation, the end result being 41 baptisms on one day. Currently, I am life-coaching in two bars. Ten patrons have shown for worship, and more than that, the spiritual dialogue is so very fascinating and fulfilling. Simply said, in a sense, I welcome and relish our so-called post-church culture. We all need to get out more!

*Rev. K.C. Bedard, Pastor
Trinity Lutheran Church
New Orleans, La.*

To pay or not to pay

I appreciated the January article by Karen Kogler on the treatment of volunteers.

However, I believe there are times when the church should be willing to pay for work that is done. Many decades ago, when I was a college music major, I was asked to direct the student choir at my church. It was a

wasn't until my children were teenagers that I decided to seek a paying job as a church choir director. By that time, I knew I would have to go outside the congregation where I was a member. I received many gifts and thank-you notes from the congregation that employed me.

However, they, too, did not like to pay member musicians. For Easter one year, I hired a brass player from my home congregation, and that same Easter the choir director at my home congregation hired a member of the church where I was employed. Both musicians were highly trained, experienced brass players. Both were paid. Yet, neither congregation saved any money. How ridiculous!

I have often wondered why congregations are willing to pay secretaries and custodians who are members, while musicians with many years of training and toil are expected to volunteer. Many highly trained musicians are willing to volunteer, but it should be their choice.

*Irene Eggers
Wheat Ridge, Colo.*

Opportunities next door

The mission articles in the October 2009 *Lutheran Witness* explain very nicely international outreach activities in Cambodia, Uganda, Korea, and Hong Kong. These are all worthwhile mission activities under LCMS World Mission and are worthy of support.

However, one glaring piece missing in the "Mission Multiplication" article is the outreach/mission needs right at our back door in Mexico. In fact, mission opportunities in Mexico are not even mentioned in this article or on the LCMS World Mission Web site.

Rather than listing far distant places where people can volunteer their time, why not highlight Mexico's border towns, and also the needs of its interior locations, where churches are supported by laypeople because of a lack of qualified pastors. Mexico is next door to four states, the population is growing, and the bulk of the people are not being given the good news of Jesus Christ.

*Jim Binneboese
Austin, Texas*



May the depth and breadth of theology in these pages guide us in carrying out the mission we have been given.

*Rev. Eric Wood
Carbondale, Ill.*

But I digress. Great job! Thank you. We in the field appreciate your work for the Lord and His people.

*Dr. Robert Hartwell, Senior Pastor
Village Lutheran Church
and The Chapel School
Adjunct Professor, Concordia College
Bronxville, N.Y.*

We applaud the new "look" of *The Lutheran Witness*, especially the attractive covers. Keep up the good work!

*Bob and Kay Schmeding
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Roanoke, Va.*

town-gown situation, and a college classmate was asked to direct the congregation's adult choir. I was told, "We can only afford to pay one of you."

It was my classmate who was paid. I've always wondered if it was because my classmate was male and I was female, or if it was because I had grown up in the congregation. (My classmate was not yet a Lutheran.)

The first congregation to which I belonged after graduation also asked me to direct their choir. Again, I was expected to volunteer, and I never received any sign of appreciation. It

Our Synod began work in Mexico in 1940. At lcmsworldmission.org/latin-america, click on "Mexico" for information about Mexico and our work there with our sister/partner church, the Lutheran Synod of Mexico. Three of our LCMS districts—Texas, Rocky Mountain, and Pacific Southwest (www.lcmsdistricts.org)—border Mexico and play leading roles in our Synod's border mission work. Also, Ysleta Lutheran Mission Human Care in El Paso, Texas, is an RSO of Synod through LCMS World Relief and Human Care. You can learn more about Ysleta Lutheran Mission at ylm.org.—Ed.

We welcome letters that comment on articles in *The Lutheran Witness*. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Send letters to "Letters," c/o *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to lutheran.witness@lcms.org. Please include your name, postal address, and telephone number.



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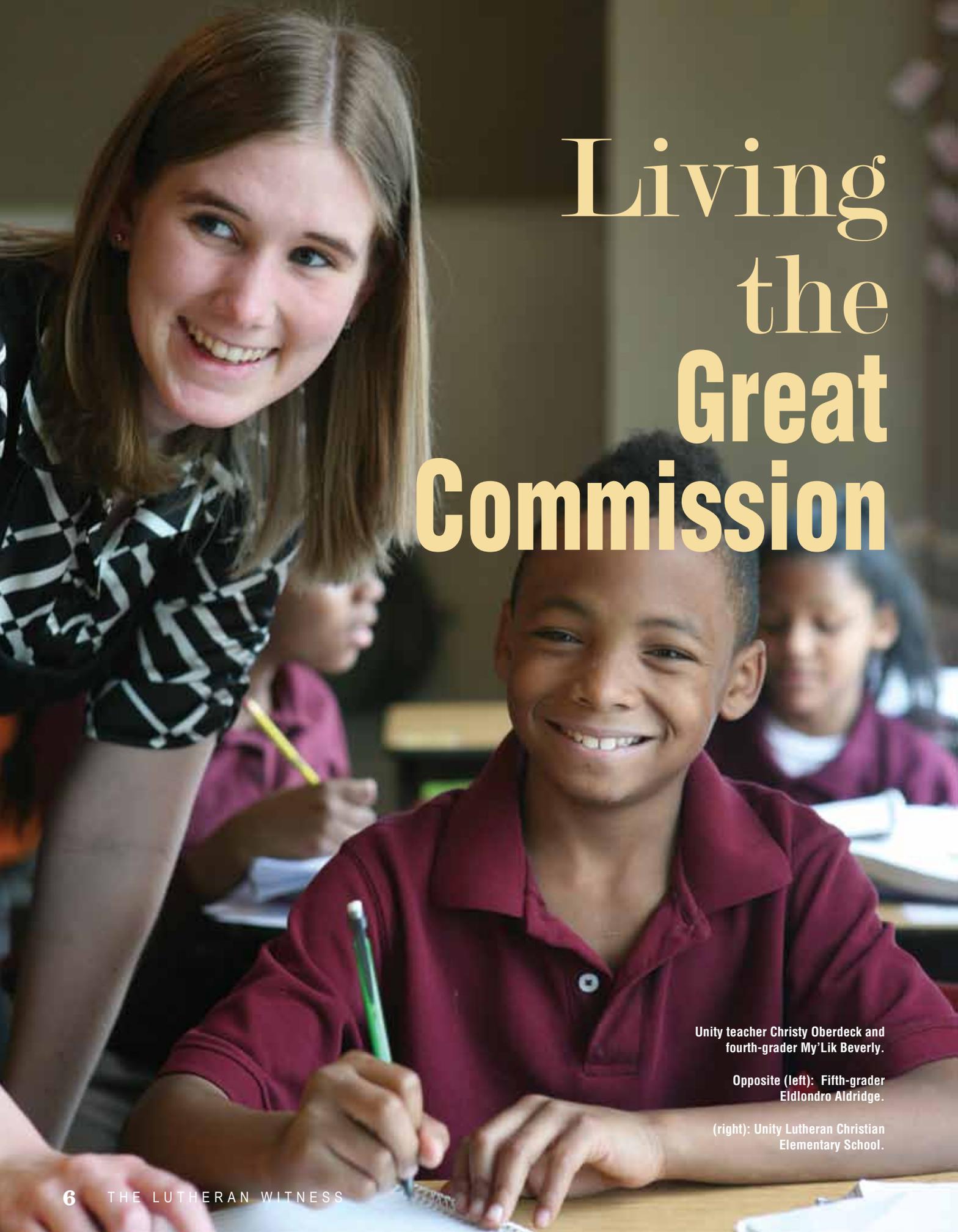
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**On the cover: Christine "Christy" Oberdeck, a teacher at Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis, Ill., shares a moment with My'Lik, a Unity student.
Cover photo courtesy Mark Wiemers/switzerfilm.com.**



Living the Great Commission

Unity teacher Christy Oberdeck and
fourth-grader My'Lik Beverly.

Opposite (left): Fifth-grader
Eldlondro Aldridge.

(right): Unity Lutheran Christian
Elementary School.



To help an urban congregation minister to its community, a district turns to one of the greatest strengths of our Synod—its system of Christian education.

Modern-day miracle. That's what many people say about Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis, Ill.

On Aug. 17, 2009, the seven-year-old school opened the doors of its new facility with 115 students in prekindergarten through sixth grade. While many inner-city churches and schools have closed their doors in recent years, Unity School is growing, a hopeful presence in a community that has seen tough times.

Today, East St. Louis, Unity's home and a once-prosperous industrial city across the Mississippi from St. Louis' Gateway Arch, confronts problems

familiar to many urban communities: the loss of industries that supported it, a declining population and tax base, poverty, and high unemployment.

Enter Unity School (unityesl.org), just one of a handful in the LCMS sponsored by a district.

"We struggled for several years, trying to find a way to help our congregation in East St. Louis," recalls Rev. Herbert C. Mueller Jr., president of the Southern Illinois District. "We also recognized there was a population of at least 30,000 we were not really reaching at all. We asked ourselves, 'What is one of the greatest strengths of the LCMS?' The answer: Our system of Christian education! Why not play to a strength God has given us and use it to reach out with the Gospel? We brainstormed. We prayed—and still pray. We did a Genesis Project. The Spirit kept on opening doors, and here we are."

Founded in 2003 and formerly located in Unity Lutheran Church, Unity School moved into a vacant public-school building this past summer because it needs space to keep up with enrollment, explains Principal Paul Miller. He remembers when Unity was so crowded that one of the classes had to be held in the church balcony.

"With this building, we will be taking the school to a new level," Miller says. "It's a 'real' school building, and I am incredibly excited."

The move did not happen overnight. For three years, Unity's board of directors and the East St. Louis School District board of directors negotiated, discussed alternatives, and looked for just the right place to house a growing



Unity. Eventually, the school building across the street from the church became available because of declining district enrollment. Then everything just fell into place, Miller explains, noting that “a lot of prayer” went into the process.

A Mission Opportunity

More than 65 percent of the school’s families do not have a regular church home. That provides a mission opportunity, and teaching children about Jesus is the most important thing done by Unity’s teachers, Miller observes.

It’s also what motivates him. “I love the kids,” he says, “and meeting their parents. This is an unusual opportunity for me to be part of a unique school. Of course, this is mission work.”

‘Unity is a strong avenue for carrying out the Great Commission. The opportunities to preach, teach, and baptize are mission opportunities for Unity Lutheran Church through Unity Lutheran Christian School.’

Vicar Willie P. Stallworth
Unity Lutheran Church

In 2003, the school began with an enrollment of 17 in prekindergarten and kindergarten. It has added a new grade each year. For 2009–10, classes are held through Grade 6. In the coming years, Unity will add Grades 7 and 8.

“There is a critical need for educational alternatives in East St. Louis,” Miller notes. “Unity fills that need.

More important, there is a positive, hopeful learning environment at Unity, where students and their families feel welcome, and their needs are met. To some, the neighborhoods where the students live may seem dark and depressing, but at Unity, there is light, there is safety, there is security, there is help, and there is comfort, and all in Jesus’ name. It’s as close to a tangible presence of the Lord that I’ve ever experienced on a regular basis.”

Getting the Word Out

Last summer, Miller met with prospective students and their families after a sign was posted outside the new facility: “New Home of Unity Lutheran Christian

Elementary School.” Within the first two weeks, Miller had 45 calls. He met with the prospective students and parents, gave out registration packets, and led tours of the building. The prospective students met the teachers—eight highly qualified, mission-minded educators.

Miller makes it a point to show the children a painting inside the front door of the school. Created by his son, Joe, a Chicago artist, the painting, based on Luke 18:16, depicts Jesus blessing the little children.

“With Jesus, the school has a purpose,” Miller says. “We teach the students about Jesus, as well as math, science, good behavior, etc.”

Miller acknowledges the success of the school is due to three things: (1) a good education, (2) a place for students



to belong, and (3) a flexible tuition rate. All students pay tuition of \$100 to \$250 per month, and all students receive financial aid based on need. Almost all of the students receive free or reduced-cost school lunches through government-assistance programs.

A District Mission Project

As a mission project of the Southern Illinois District, many district congregations, schools, and organizations are involved with the school, Mueller explains. Also, hundreds of mission-minded Christians from across the country have shown their support through the school's Belong to Jesus Scholarship Fund.

"I'm often surprised at the generosity of Christian people. We've even received help from people who live outside our district, in central Illinois, northern Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa," Miller says.

Sweat Equity

Getting Unity's new facility ready was a substantial challenge. All the ceiling tiles were replaced, 83 gallons of paint applied, several dumpsters of trash removed, and a new phone and security system installed. Youth cleared debris and weeds that had overgrown the playground.

"The school would not have been ready if it were not for the countless



The Unity project has made a difference in the district 'almost like no other.' It has energized laypeople and involved them in a hands-on way.

making sure everything was done within time and budget constraints.

"I feel like the Lord had prepared me for this project by giving me the talents, the time, and the resources needed to accomplish it," Hughes says.

The new facility has had a positive effect. Miller reports that classes are running smoothly, with more room to operate. Also, there is a waiting list for the 2010-2011 school year. Yet, in the midst of these developments, the mission to the students remains the focus.

"Every Monday morning, while taking church attendance, I am reminded that Unity is truly a missional school," observes fourth-grade teacher Christy Oberdeck. "Seventy-five percent of my students do not attend church. Unity is the only place they hear the Word of God. I was extremely happy when one of my students started attending Unity Church on a regular basis. I was *exceedingly* happy when this student and his family decided he should be baptized. God is doing mighty things at Unity!"

Colette Tisdale, Unity's prekindergarten teacher, agrees. "My children

hours spent by the faithful volunteers of our district," Miller says.

More than 100 volunteers from over 30 congregations showed up the Saturday before opening day to help Unity's teachers move to the new site. A ginkgo tree was planted to symbolize new life for the school. That idea came from Harold Hughes, the project's volunteer construction manager. Hughes, a retired civil engineer, began working with Unity's school committee in September 2008. From mid-May onward, he spent every day at the site,

Opposite

(top left): Second-graders DeJuan Byrd and Deonna Williams.

(top right): Rashad Jackson, kindergartner.

(bottom): Sixth-grader Arielle Hampton solves math problems.

Top: A ginkgo tree was planted to symbolize new life for the school.

Bottom: A sign was posted outside the school announcing the new location of Unity Lutheran Christian Elementary School in East St. Louis, Ill.



get so excited when we are reviewing that they go home and recite Bible passages and sing songs. I even have two students who can recite all Ten Commandments," she says.

Challenges Ahead

Miller recognizes that challenges remain for the school. These include funding; improving mission efforts to include Baptism and discipling of new Christians, both students and adults; developing after-school programs to utilize space and provide more opportunities to reach out to the community; and developing the transition of eighth-grade graduates to a Christian high school.

"The school is making a difference in the children's lives," Miller observes. "For all of our students, this is the first time a Christian education has been an option. We thank God for providing us with that opportunity."

"We all are faced with the pits of sin daily," says DELTO vicar Willie P. Stallworth, who serves Unity Church. "However, many of the children who attend Unity School are faced with greater challenges than most. Unity is a strong avenue for carrying out the Great Commission. The opportunities to preach, teach, and baptize are mission opportunities for Unity Lutheran Church through Unity Lutheran Christian School. Both the church and school see this mission as an opportunity to obey Christ's command."

Mueller notes something else, too: The Unity project has made a difference in the district "almost like no other." It has energized laypeople and involved them in a hands-on way.

"Many have testified to me that they have grown spiritually through this, watching God open the doors and supporting our staff," Mueller says. "Many say they now can see in a greater way the value of what our district is doing. This project has helped our people and congregations sharpen their mission focus."

A writer and photographer, Lois M. Engfehr (engfehrm@earthlink.net) is a member of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Collinsville, Ill. She is the editor of the *Southern Illinois District News*.



Getting Started: What Is the Genesis Project?



A resource offered by LCMS District and Congregational Services' School Ministry Department, the Genesis Project helps LCMS congregations (and other LCMS entities) start Lutheran schools, whether early childhood, elementary, middle, or high-school programs.

The project is staffed by consultants with experience in Lutheran school administration.

The department has compiled a "top 10" list of why congregations start Lutheran schools, says Bill Cochran, District and Congregational Services executive director:

- Strengthen the congregation
- Nurture the children's faith
- Help parents fulfill their role as Christian parents
- Strengthen their communities
- Provide a safe, caring place for children
- Help children see all of their lives from the perspective of God's Word
- Demonstrate the high value the congregation places on children
- Enhance the public relations of the congregation
- Seek out the lost
- Fulfill the congregation's responsibility for the Christian education of its children

For districts or congregations considering the establishment of a Lutheran school, Southern Illinois District president Herbert C. Mueller Jr. offers this encouragement: "Go to the Word of God to see what God says about teaching. Pray. Then dream big. God is not limited by our resources! He has far more available to Him than we can ever imagine."

Applications for Genesis services may be obtained from your LCMS district office.—L.M.E.



Notes from a Principal's Journal



Forgiveness Needed, Too (September 2009)

Even though the school year has just begun, our students are already learning the proper way to solve their differences.

One of our new prekindergarten students, Byron, was accidentally hit by a jump rope while on the playground last week. An observant teacher reported that, instead of crying or hitting back, Byron explained to the other student that “you’re supposed to say I’m sorry, and I’m supposed to say I forgive you.”

That’s the biblical guide for relationships. When we repent and ask for forgiveness, God grants mercy and the sin is forgiven, forever. The situation is not resolved until forgiveness is announced. We’re proud that our students are learning how to share the forgiveness we receive. —*Paul Miller*

The Little Missionary (October 2009)

One of our new third-graders is Quinton. He has easily made the transition to a new school and has fit in nicely with the rest of the students. His teacher, Mrs. Stallworth, has made him feel welcome.

Two weeks ago, Quinton’s father approached me after school with a question: “What are you doing to teach these kids the Bible?” he inquired. I tried to decipher his intent from the tone of his voice. I wasn’t quite sure.

“I want to know how you are teaching the Scriptures,” he went on. “My son comes home and tells me everything about the Bible. Even the little details. It’s amazing!”

Here’s a good opportunity, I thought to myself. I went on to explain how we meet every morning for “Belong to Jesus Time”; we follow a pattern every day which we call a liturgy; every week we have a new Bible story, a new Bible passage, and a new catechism lesson (Quinton’s father didn’t know what a catechism is). I invited Dad into my office, where I was able to share a couple of Arch® Books with him. He seemed genuinely appreciative and willing to partner in his son’s spiritual growth.

We are happy that the Holy Spirit is using our school to teach Quinton, and He is using Quinton to teach his dad.

Quinton, the little missionary! —*Paul Miller*



Page 10 (bottom): Colette Tisdale, pictured with twins Coriana and Corrina Hall, teaches prekindergarten at Unity School.

Page 11: (Top): Principal Paul Miller.

(Bottom): Deonna Williams, Raigan Wilson, Teanta Neal, and Principal Paul Miller.



Hope in Haiti: One Moment One Person at a Time

by Kim Plummer Krull



After a long day of trekking through pulverized cities, Rev. Glenn Merritt joins a late-night worship service at First Lutheran Church in Jacmel, Haiti. Piles of dusty rubble still cover the bodies of Haitians who not so long ago were working, studying, shopping, and playing.

Tears fill the eyes of the LCMS director of disaster response (a former police officer and search-and-rescue veteran) as some 200 homeless earthquake survivors gathered at the church compound break into soaring harmony. Their hymn, sung in French: "How Great Thou Art."

When a fellow Lutheran questions how the LCMS can make a difference in a country with huge challenges before the earthquake and facing even more now, Merritt talks about that service in Jacmel. He calls it one of many "moments of mercy" he experienced in Haiti after the Jan. 12 disaster that killed an estimated 230,000 (the same death toll as the 2004 Asian tsunami) and left some 1.5 million homeless.

On behalf of the LCMS, LCMS World Relief and Human Care (the Synod's mercy arm) is working cooperatively with LCMS World Mission (the Synod's sending arm), LCMS districts and congregations, Haitian mission societies, and Haitian Lutherans to bring what Merritt calls "moments of mercy into a life in misery."

"The [Haitian Lutheran] pastors told us over and over again that the best thing we have done was to come to them and be with them during this national tragedy," says Merritt, who traveled

with the Haitian pastors and representatives from LCMS World Relief and Human Care (LCMS WR-HC) and LCMS World Mission to evaluate needs after the 7.0 magnitude earthquake. "I was told that our presence helped them to continue ministering in such difficult times. When we can give them hope . . . they pass that hope on to the suffering masses in Haiti."

After the TV Cameras Leave

Today, the LCMS has moved beyond the early emergency stage into the next steps of a disaster response that, both American and Haitian Lutherans pray, will continue to share hope in Haiti long after the Western Hemisphere's poorest country disappears from nightly newscasts.

Providing funds for food, water, and shelter and shipping additional supplies (including medicine) are ways the Synod is assisting the Caribbean nation. (Visit lcms.org/witness for a sampling of the many LCMS partners working on the Haiti earthquake response.) But the LCMS also is walking alongside Haitian Lutheran partners, reaching out through local congregations and touching hurting people.

One such partner is the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH), an LCMS partner church since 2001. "The ELCH has strong leaders we already were working with before the earthquake," says Rev. Dr. Jorge Groh, regional director for Latin

Today, the LCMS has moved beyond the early emergency stage into the next steps of a disaster response that, both American and Haitian Lutherans pray, will continue to share hope in Haiti long after the Western Hemisphere's poorest country disappears from nightly newscasts.



Above: Chaplain Steve Lee, a critical incident stress specialist and member of the LCMS assessment team, prepares to give out medical supplies in Port-au-Prince.

Below: In Haiti, Director of Disaster Response Rev. Glenn Merritt (left), LCMS World Relief and Human Care Executive Rev. Matthew Harrison, and Rev. Dr. Jorge Groh, regional director for Latin America with LCMS World Mission, prepare for another day of assessing and responding to earthquake relief needs. Photo courtesy Matt Schlanger.

LCMS World Relief and Human Care is working cooperatively with LCMS World Mission, LCMS districts and congregations, Haitian mission societies, and Haitian Lutherans to bring what Merritt calls ‘moments of mercy into a life in misery.’



America with LCMS World Mission who also assessed needs in Port-au-Prince and Jacmel, the hard-hit hometowns of many Haitian Lutheran congregations. “Now [the ELCH] can be strong partners as we work together to provide for material needs and more for the people in Haiti.”

Three weeks after the earthquake, two LCMS teams work in Jacmel, a city largely overlooked by aid organizations concentrating on the capital of Port-au-Prince. First Lutheran is the congregation of ELCH President Marky Kessa, one of many Haitian Lutheran pastors educated at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind. Kessa “has great love for his people who are suffering so much and wants to do all he can as part of the body of Christ,” says Olga Groh, director of project management in Latin America and the Caribbean with LCMS World Mission and LCMS WR-HC.

A nine-person Mercy Medical Team (MMT) sets up a makeshift outdoor clinic at the First Lutheran compound. This is the second such group of medical volunteers coordinated by LCMS WR-HC to treat earthquake survivors. Three more MMTs are scheduled to staff the clinic into March.

Even as the MMT gets organized, a man who lost his leg in the earthquake hobbles over seeking pain relief. A steady stream of some 150 patients follows on that first day. MMT members also lend a hand at the local hospital where one doctor is overwhelmed with critical needs, including a 6-month-old baby who was buried in rubble for three days.

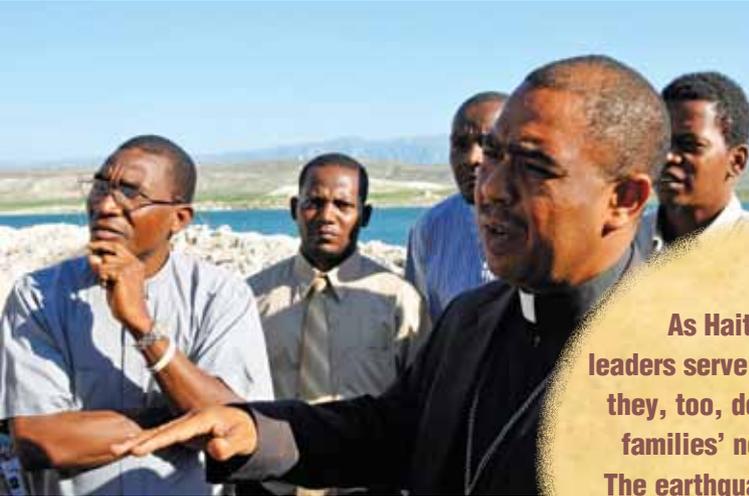
On the team’s fourth day in Jacmel, LCMS Life and Health Ministries director Maggie Karner rushes an 8-day-old infant from the First Lutheran clinic to the local hospital. The child is dehydrated and malnourished. “The mother brought the baby to us because she didn’t know what to do,” says Karner, explaining how team members treat the baby and teach the first-time mother about breastfeeding.

The medical volunteers also give the young woman a tent when they learn she and the child sleep outdoors without shelter. They invite her to return to the church compound for food. When happy tears stream down the mother’s face,

Karner calls the episode “one of those moments in life when you realize why we’re doing what we’re doing because we touched one life.”

LCMS teams also help Haitians open food programs at First Lutheran and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Port-au-Prince. The sites are expected to serve a total of 500 people daily for at least four weeks. Missionaries working with LCMS World Mission in the neighboring Dominican Republic coordinate the shipments of food, water, and cooking oil—urgently needed provisions made possible by generous donors who, to date, have given more than \$3 million to LCMS WR-HC for the Haiti earthquake response.

Of course, tackling logistical challenges (including closed airports and blocked roads) to secure and transport supplies is nothing new for these missionaries. Almost as soon as the ground stopped shaking on Jan. 12, Rev. Ted Krey and the Dominican Republic mission team began coordinating efforts that provided food and medical care for hundreds of refugees who fled across the border.



Rev. Thomas Bernard, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (far left) and Rev. Marky Kessa, president of the ELCH, with other Haitian church leaders at the Dominican Republic-Haiti border. Photo courtesy Matt Schlanger. Below: A tent camp at Jacmel

As Haitian Lutheran leaders serve their weary flocks, they, too, deal with their own families' needs and losses. The earthquake's property toll includes 20 ELCH churches or facilities damaged or destroyed.

While the clinic and feeding station in Jacmel meet physical needs, a pastoral care team offers spiritual support. An LCMS pastoral-care team comforts earthquake survivors at a refugee camp where as many as 5,000 Haitians live in haphazard tents, cooking rice and beans over open fires.

The pastors also listen and pray with their exhausted Haitian counterparts. As Haitian Lutheran leaders serve their weary flocks, they, too, deal with their own families' needs and losses. The earthquake's property toll includes 20 ELCH churches or facilities damaged or destroyed.

Rev. Thomas Bernard, pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran in Port-au-Prince, says some Haitians believe the earthquake means "God is very upset with Haiti because some of the people are doing things which are . . . against God's Word."

But Bernard tells the LCMS pastors that he knows that God "is still with Haiti, and with us." He and other ELCH pastors share the Gospel, assuring their fellow Haitians that "even though we are facing all these kinds of problems in Haiti, that doesn't mean God doesn't love us. He does love us."

The Next Steps

Lutherans, both in the United States and Haiti, know all too well that there are no simple solutions for a poor

nation plunged into even deeper need. As he prepares to return to the United States, Merritt worries about how the approaching rainy season means more problems for earthquake survivors in flimsy tents. Helping to provide more sustainable shelter, water purification, and sanitation while continuing shipments of food, hygiene kits, medical supplies, and generators are among the "next steps" LCMS partners plan to address.

But despite overwhelming challenges, LCMS ministries also see hope. Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS WR-HC, points to the Synod's improved disaster response. "We are more prepared for this disaster than we have ever been in the history of the LCMS," said Harrison, citing strategies implemented over the past decade that helped build the LCMS capacity to respond in Haiti—and to the next crisis, whether that's in the United States or overseas.

Harrison also sees hope for Haiti through lives touched "one at a time."

"Our vocation is not to change Haiti, or to change the whole world, or to change the economic realities with which Haitians wrestle," Harrison reflects as he gets ready to head home after providing pastoral care in Haiti. "Our vocation is to act and make a life-changing difference one at a time. And acting one at a time, we find that over some hours, over a few days, and over a couple of weeks, the flock of those helped in the name of Jesus has grown to be surprisingly large."

Kim Plummer Krull (kimkrull@sbcglobal.net) is an editor-at-large for *The Lutheran Witness* and a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Des Peres, Mo.





President Kieschnick to Visit Haiti in March

As *The Lutheran Witness* goes to press, LCMS president Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick announced plans to travel to Haiti March 1 to meet with Haitian Lutherans as part of the Synod's long-term disaster response.

Kieschnick's plans include meeting with the pastors and people most directly affected by the destruction, including Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti president Marky Kessa. The trip's purpose, the LCMS president said in a written announcement, includes "visiting, meeting, and praying with those most directly impacted by the destruction, joining together in prayer and planning relative to the ongoing details of the long-term LCMS response" and "upholding the work of our staff and volunteers on the ground who are providing direct relief assistance, medical care, and pastoral support."

While he had hoped to schedule an earlier trip, Kieschnick said he continued to be informed that the logistical complexities would have prevented him and Kessa from meeting in Haiti "without logistical hassle and inordinate expense."

Kieschnick said the trip's timing reflects his desire "to be as helpful as possible to our brothers and sisters in Haiti as they cope with the aftermath of this disaster" and also support LCMS personnel "in a manner that will demonstrate the most faithful and fruitful stewardship of the many dollars contributed by LCMS people for Haiti relief." —K.P.K.

Mercy Arm Reaches Out with a Uniquely Lutheran Response to Disaster

During a disaster, some people wrongly assume LCMS World Relief and Human Care (LCMS WR-HC) operates like a miniature American Red Cross. Instead, the Synod's mercy arm seeks to complement, not compete with, other disaster relief organizations by reaching out in a uniquely Lutheran way that includes the following:

Working with local Lutheran partners. When a disaster hits, LCMS WR-HC joins forces with Lutheran partners (such as a partner church body or local congregations) already on the ground. This provides immediate contacts, enables relief efforts to quickly begin, and helps ensure that assistance reaches people in need. "In Haiti, we're providing relief but also helping the ELCH (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti) build their own capacity so they are better equipped for their struggles," said LCMS WR-HC's Rev. Dr. Albert B. Collver III.

Meeting both physical and spiritual needs. As a "body and soul" ministry, LCMS WR-HC provides material supplies as well as spiritual support.

Pastoral care teams comfort Haitian earthquake survivors who lost loved ones and homes. They listen to emotionally drained medical volunteers and pray with Haitian Lutheran pastors struggling to care for their congregations while they cope with their own losses. "After a disaster, people need someone to listen as they speak about what has happened," said LCMS WR-HC's Rev. Carlos Hernandez. "We don't force our faith on anyone but, when invited, take the opportunity to say, 'Jesus loves you.'"

Staying for the long haul. Long after a disaster disappears from the headlines, LCMS WR-HC continues to work with Lutheran partners to meet needs. In Asia, educational and vocational projects continue to assist survivors of the 2004 tsunami. Last year, an LCMS WR-HC Mercy Medical Team treated Indonesians still suffering from that disaster's physical and emotional toll. One Indonesian told LCMS WR-HC's Maggie Karner, "Others have left, but you [LCMS WR-HC] are still here." —K.P.K.

On the Web

To contribute to Haiti relief online, visit givenowlcms.org.

To learn more about

LCMS World Relief and Human Care, visit lcms.org/worldrelief.

LCMS earthquake response efforts in Haiti, visit lcms.org/ca/worldrelief/dnews.

Mercy Medical Teams, visit lcms.org/mercyteams.

LCMS World Mission Haiti updates, visit lcmsworldmission.org.

At lcms.org/witness, you can find these Web-exclusive stories:

- **"Working in Partnership to Assist Haitians."** Many Lutheran partners are working cooperatively with LCMS World Relief and Human Care, LCMS World Mission, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti.
- **"Being Prepared, Lending a Hand."** The Haiti earthquake makes us think about how we can prepare if a disaster hits close to home.
- **"When 'Wanting to Do the Right Thing' Might Get You into Trouble."** The plight of the Baptist missionaries arrested in Haiti is a sober reminder that sometimes "wanting to do the right thing" can have unintended consequences.
- **"Again, the 'Why' Question."** Rev. John T. Pless, assistant professor of pastoral ministry and missions and director of field education at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., offers a reflection on the ancient question: Why is there suffering?

Additional stories about Haiti and our Synod's response are available also at the online site of *Reporter*, our sister publication. Visit lcms.org/reporter.



Haiti at a Glance

by James Neuendorf

In 1804, slaves brought from Africa to Haiti rebelled against their French colonial overlords and created the first black republic in the New World. These unique circumstances have given birth to a rich and diverse culture that unfortunately also bears an overwhelmingly tragic history. In the past few decades alone, countless hurricanes, wars, and famines have ravaged this tiny nation, and many here are searching for hope and relief. Though far worse than any previous disaster, the present crisis is sadly just one crushing blow among many.

Occupying the western half of the sun-soaked mountainous island of Hispaniola, and sharing its borders with the lush Dominican Republic and the turquoise waters of the Caribbean, the chalky white barrens of Haiti and its struggling citizens seem distinctly out of place. Eighty percent of Haiti's population of nearly 9 million lives in poverty, with half struggling to obtain even the most basic needs such as food or clean water. At 680 people per square mile, Haiti is the most densely populated country in the western hemisphere. Most scratch out a living through small-scale subsistence agriculture, though soil erosion caused by extreme deforestation renders much of the land infertile. One in 10 children do not survive infancy, and access to medical and sanitary facilities is limited at best.

Haiti stands out among the countries of Latin America as one of the very few nations that does not share the common language and culture of colonial Spain. French colonial culture and language fused with that of West African slaves to create a unique language known as Haitian Creole.

Echoing their West African roots, Haitians are deeply attuned to the spiritual world, place immense value in family relationships, and are extremely hospitable and generous. Most live in humble cinder-block homes, usually with little or no access to running water or electricity. Normally, when resources permit, Haitians eat three meals a day, mainly consisting of rice and beans, but often including pork, goat, fish, or local tropical fruits. Haitians value time spent visiting with each other, and when employment is available, are hardworking. Accustomed to hardship, Haitians are a strong and resilient people with an inspiring attitude.

Though the vast majority claims affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church, voodoo, a Caribbean version of West African shamanism, permeates the society. Under the pseudonyms of Catholic saints, demonic spirits are called upon and worshiped by many Haitians seeking supernatural aid to their constant challenges in daily life.

The Lutheran Church has had a strong presence in Haiti for many years. Beginning in 1978, individuals and groups from the LCMS started working with Haitian Lutherans to expand local mission opportunities. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Haiti (ELCH) is strongly confessional, and many of its leaders received their training from LCMS seminaries in the United States.

Since 2001, the ELCH has been in altar and pulpit fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and it continues to work closely with several LCMS mission societies and congregations. LCMS World Mission has one GEO (long-term) missionary currently serving in Les Ceyes, Haiti, as a deaconess intern of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., under the supervision of a Haitian pastor. Alyssa Stone and her two daughters have been serving in Haiti for nearly six months. The current president of the ELCH is Rev. Marky Kessa.

Unfortunately, divisions within the church have caused the ELCH to split into smaller groups, which while in doctrinal agreement, are still in the process of Christian reconciliation.

James Neuendorf is a communications specialist missionary with LCMS World Mission in Latin America.

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Receiving Consolation

An online search leads to an encounter with a Lutheran pastor and an opportunity to find forgiveness, comfort, and release.

I was guilty. And anguished by what I had done. No matter how I tried to justify what I had done by calling it a means to an end, or a way to get ahead, I just couldn't comprehend how I had gone this far. I had sinned this way before, but I was always able to move past it. My sins often hurt people, but to my thinking, I had to take care of myself and "make my own luck."

This view had always made it possible for me to feel very little guilt. But not this time. My sin was especially cruel and awful. It was a calculated sin, and its severity took me by surprise. No matter how hard I tried, I was not able to rationalize it. This sin was torturing me. I would lie in bed at night and fight the sin tooth and nail. It was in my face, flaunting

itself, relentlessly accusing and taking delight in my fretting and pain. I was like an animal in a cage, pacing back and forth in my mind, trying to blame others, trying even to blame God. I was not sleeping. I was not eating. I had become introverted. Friends and family noticed. I was in agony. One night, I gave up all the excuses, the rationalizations, the blaming, and I fell on my knees, begging God to help me.

And He did.

**One night,
I gave up all the excuses,
the rationalizations, the
blaming, and I fell on my
knees, begging God
to help me.**

I googled the word *sin*. Eventually, this led me to “sin and forgiveness,” then to “confession and forgiveness,” and finally to “confession and absolution.” I read all about confession. This was something I longed to do, but I did not associate private confession with my nominal church home. Yet, I thought the act of confession would free me from this sin. I had to be free. I couldn’t stand the torture anymore.

I thought long and hard about going to an online confession site and just putting my sin out there for the world to see. Others were doing it. I could hide my identity. But it just seemed to be lacking something. Somehow—I know now it was by the grace of God—I came to the Web site of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lockport, Ill. The pastor,

Rev. Mark Hein, had written an article for his parishioners about the importance of private confession and absolution in a Christian’s life. He gave times he would be available in the church to hear these confessions and give absolution. I had an instantaneous, almost uncontrollable desire to meet this Pastor Hein in his church and confess what I had done. But there was a problem. I had never heard of Lockport, Ill. And it was half a country away. But there was a “contact the pastor” option; so I clicked on it.

I e-mailed a few basic questions about confession and absolution, thinking a response was unlikely. But I was in too much agony not to try. To my surprise, Pastor Hein responded. He described confession and absolution and asked if he could set me up with a Lutheran pastor in my area.

My immediate thought was *no way!* I was still trying to deny this sin, still trying to evade its power over me. Suddenly, the fear that someone would know what I had done was trumping the torture this sin had been causing me. So I e-mailed back with a few more questions about private confession and absolution.

Yes, I was stalling. Trying to decide if this sin was really plaguing me enough to visit a local pastor. Telling myself that I was giving this sin too much importance in my life, that I just needed to just get over it.

Denial again.

One e-mail led to another on that pivotal Sunday night, and the next thing I knew, I was telling Pastor Hein that I had sinned grievously, and I wholeheartedly regretted what I had done. Instantly he was back. I will never forget the words he wrote: “Because Jesus Christ has died for you, and because you truly and heartily repent of your sin, you are forgiven. You really are. Your sin is gone.”

Then I cried, suddenly and powerfully released from my prison. I told

Pastor Hein that I wasn’t sure what had just happened but in those words I could feel this sin just evaporate and float away. It was gone. Really and truly gone. That night, for the first time in two months, I slept peacefully and soundly. My dreams were joyful and calm. I woke up renewed and restored, finally free.

The online confession sites I explored don’t give the full benefit of private confession and absolution. I was tempted by these sites, thinking the freedom from the sin would come in the confession. In fact, I never really told Pastor Hein the actual sin. But I did confess that I had sinned and was sorry. God knew the sin.

However, it was not in the act of confession that I experienced relief. The peace, the release, and the solace came in the absolution. Those words are not psychobabble. They are real. I felt those words. The words of forgiveness calmed my very troubled heart. They healed my soul. The absolution is real, it is powerful, it is living, it is Jesus.

**That night,
for the first time
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**‘Because Jesus Christ
has died for you, and
because you truly and heart-
ily repent of your sin, you are
forgiven. You really are.
Your sin is gone.’**

This story is not over. It is still being written. Pastor Hein was able to connect us, my whole family, with a local Lutheran pastor through a series of “coincidences” that is a story in itself. To that pastor I did confess the specifics of my sin. And he also pronounced absolution. We—my husband and children and I—are on a journey, now learning the cycle of repentance and forgiveness that characterizes the Christian life. Together with the whole Christian church, we weekly confess our sins and receive absolution. But I will never forget the incredible freeing power from that awe-filled, life-changing Sunday night of private confession and absolution.

I copied the words from that e-mail absolution to have as a daily reminder. And I will always have a special place in my heart for my first pastor, Pastor Hein, this man I have never seen, whose voice I have never heard. The pastor who reached across cyberspace and, on the merits of Jesus, “loosed” my sin. Thank you, Pastor Hein. Thank You, Jesus!

Jennifer Smith is a pseudonym for the author, who submitted this story to Rev. Mark Hein, pastor of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lockport, Ill., in the hope that it would be published and so encourage others to avail themselves of private confession and absolution. Only Pastor Hein and the pastor to whom he referred the author know the name and circumstances of the author, who has approved the publication of this story.



Luther and Private Confession: Balm for Consciences Afflicted by Sin

At the time of the Reformation, Luther and all of the faithful reformers insisted upon retaining private confession and absolution in the Church. Why? Because of the great benefit to the one who is confessing his or her sins to openly admit (confess) the same and then to hear from the lips of the called and ordained servant of the Lord (their pastor) the wonderful words of absolution.

When the Lutheran princes approached Emperor Charles V in 1530 and presented the Augsburg Confession, they stated the following in Art. XI:

It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse. However, in confession it is not necessary to enumerate all trespasses and sins, for this is impossible. Ps. 19:12, “Who can discern his errors?”

Also, Luther wrote the following regarding private confession and absolution:

Private confession should be retained in the church, for in it consciences afflicted and crushed by the terrors of sin lay themselves bare and receive consolation which they could not acquire in public preaching. We want to open up confession as a port and refuge for those whose consciences the devil holds enmeshed in his snares and whom he completely bewitches and torments in such a way that they cannot free or extricate themselves and feel and see nothing else but that they must perish. For there is no other greater misery in this life than the pains and perplexities of a heart that is destitute of guidance and solace (Luther’s Works 6:297–298 AE).

Elsewhere, he said:

For this reason I have a high regard for private confession, for here God’s word and absolution are spoken privately and individually to each believer for the forgiveness of his sins, and as often as he desires it he may have recourse to it for this forgiveness, and also for comfort, counsel, and guidance. Thus it is a precious, useful thing for souls, as long as no one is driven to it with laws and commandments but sinners are left free to make use of it, each according to his own need, when and where he wishes; just as we are free to obtain counsel and comfort, guidance and instruction when and where our need or our inclination moves us. And as long as one is not forced to enumerate all sins but only those which oppress him most grievously (Luther’s Works 37:368 AE).

If you desire private confession and absolution, talk with your pastor. You and he can arrange an appropriate time. There is even a form for individual confession and absolution in our *Lutheran Service Book*. And remember, your pastor, at his ordination, took a vow never to divulge to anyone what is said to him in private confession. Also, do not shy away from private confession because you are concerned that your pastor will think less of you because of your sins or act differently toward you afterward. This will not happen because he rejoices that you have confessed your sins and have received full and complete forgiveness through Christ our Lord.

—Adapted with permission from the Web site of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church Lockport, Ill.

2010 March for Life

A Reflection



Human life, no matter what stage of development and no matter what condition it's in, is precious because of God's creative work and Christ's redemptive act.

It's Thursday, Jan. 22, 1998. Tens of thousands of people have gathered near the Washington Monument to hear politicians speak and priests and pastors pray. As my friend and I stand underneath the Lutherans For Life banner, preparing to be part of the largest pro-life gathering in America, my thoughts wander while I'm trying to keep warm, and I wonder to myself, "What am I doing here?"

Twelve years ago, I participated in my first March for Life. I don't really remember much of the particulars, like the weather or the people I met that day, but I do remember that my friend and I left New Jersey in the middle of the night to get to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Springfield, Va., for the pre-march Divine Service sponsored by Lutherans For Life. I remember that this was a pivotal moment in my life.

Before 1997, before I became pro-life, I believed that abortion was wrong and that it was murder. But I also believed that it was a woman's choice; it was a woman's right; and ultimately, it was a woman's problem. How ignorant I was back then.

Since becoming involved with pro-life organizations, I've learned much about what it means to reach out to someone in Christian compassion when the world is telling them that the only solution for their situation is death. What we say to, and how we help, the pregnant teen abandoned by her boyfriend, the parents whose child has a disability, or the wife who has a husband with a terminal illness says more about what we believe and who we are than anything else. Human life, no matter what stage of development and no matter what condition it's in, is precious because of God's creative work and Christ's redemptive act. This fact alone should motivate us to speak for life.

It's Friday, Jan. 22, 2010. Hundreds of thousands of people have come to the National Mall to participate in the March for Life. After attending a pre-march Divine Service at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Alexandria, Va., Lutherans gather under two banners this year: Lutherans For Life and LCMS Life Ministries.

The past year has brought one blow after another to the pro-life movement in America. The federal government is once again promoting abortion internationally through the United Nations with taxpayer's money; federal funding of destructive embryonic stem-cell research has returned; and the Montana Supreme Court has ruled that assisted suicide in their state is not illegal.

And yet there is good news! More Americans believe that abortion is wrong. More Americans are speaking up against federal laws and programs that do not protect human life. And more Americans have the courage to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

There seems to be no end to the sea of people as I look around from our gathering place near the Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building. Twelve years later, I know why I am here—I am honored and humbled to be able to serve God by taking part in the largest pro-life gathering in America.

A commissioned lay minister, Ed Szeto (ed.szeto@lcms.org) is the special projects coordinator for LCMS Life Ministries, part of LCMS World Relief and Human Care.



On the Web

For articles, interviews, and photos from the 2010 March for Life, visit LCMS Life Ministries' March for Life Newsroom: lcms.org?16366.

For the latest information on the current health-care-reform legislation, visit the LCMS Life Ministries' Health Care Reform in America Web page: lcms.org?15667. —E.K.S.

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

REV. GREG STUCKWISCH was appointed circuit counselor of the McCook Circuit, effective immediately, for the balance of the present term which ends at the Nebraska District convention in June 2012, replacing REV. PAUL WARNEKE, who resigned the position due to his acceptance of a call to Hastings, Neb.—Rev. Russ Sommerfeld, President, LCMS Nebraska District.

REV. DAVID ZANDT, Franklin, Wis., resigned from the Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Bylaw 2.11), effective Jan. 10, 2010.—Rev. John C. Wille, President, LCMS South Wisconsin District.

Resolution 2-01 of the LCMS Michigan District Convention in June 2009 was adopted. The purpose of this resolution is "To Transfer Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Ortonville from Circuit 12—Flint South Circuit to Circuit 17—Oakland North Circuit."—Rev. David P.E. Maier, President, LCMS Michigan District.

Official Notices—Colloquies

TYSON A. WUNDERLICH, Cape Girardeau, Mo.; DEBORAH S. WROZIER, St. Peters, Mo.; TAMMY J. AGANS, Frankenmuth, Mich.; TARA L. COURSON, Jacksonville, Fla.; EMILY R. ESCHELBACH, Fort Wayne, Ind.; DANICA L. KASSEBAUM, Anaheim, Calif.; LYNN D. EATON, Houston, Texas; BRENT D. NEAL, Houston, Texas; and HEATHER C. NEWCOM, 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.

TARA McMILLER BARRETT, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis., completed the Director of Christian Education Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn., and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Stephen Stohlmann, Director of Colloquy, Concordia University, St. Paul, 275 Syndicate St. N., St. Paul, MN 55104.

BRENDA RICHARDSON, Harbor Beach, Mich.; and DAWN KOHN, Muskegon, Mich., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dennis Genig, Dean, School of Education, Concordia University, Ann Arbor, 4090 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2797.

Official Notices—Requests for Reinstatement

CARL R. LAMPITT, Hanceville, Ala., and MICHAEL PICKHARDT, Ixonia, Wis., have applied for reinstatement to the Ministers of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. MARK MATTHEWS EWALD, Neoga, Ill.; KATHERINE A. JONES, Lansing, Mich.; DAVID SCHNURSTEIN,

Apple Valley, Calif.; and DIANNE WRASE, Dearborn Heights, Mich., 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 April 5.—Dr. Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

Notice of Election

President, Concordia University Irvine Concordia University, Irvine, Calif., has scheduled the election of a new president for May 4.

The following persons were nominated in conformity with the LCMS *Handbook*, and having accepted nomination, become candidates.

Rev. Dr. James Bachman (Irvine, CA)
Dr. Johnnie Driessner (Gresham, OR)
Dr. Kurt Krueger (Saint Louis, MO)
Dr. Gary McDaniel (Cypress, CA)
Rev. Dr. Steven P. Mueller (Lake Forest, CA)
Rev. Dr. Robert D. Newton (San Jose, CA)
Dr. Timothy C. Peters (Orange, CA)
Rev. Timothy R. Puls (Fort Wayne, IN)
Rev. Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr. (Fort Wayne, IN)
Rev. Thomas K. Ries (Kirkwood, MO)
Rev. Dr. Douglas L. Rutt (Fort Wayne, IN)
Rev. Gregory Seltz (Orange, CA)
Dr. Howard Sundberg (Lancaster, CA)
Rev. Dr. James W. Voelz (Des Peres, MO)
Dr. Mark E. Wahlers (Portland, OR)

The following persons were nominated in conformity with the LCMS *Handbook*, but have chosen to decline the nomination:

Rev. Dr. Andrew Bartelt (Saint Louis, MO)
Dr. William Cario (Mequon, WI)
Rev. Dr. Patrick T. Ferry (Wauwatosa, WI)
Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Gibbs (Saint Louis, MO)
Rev. Dr. Bruce Kintz (Collinsville, IL)
Rev. Dr. Dale A. Meyer (Saint Louis, MO)
Dr. W. Stan Meyer (Phoenix, AZ)
Mr. Brian Mueller (Phoenix, AZ)
Rev. Dr. John Nunes (Baltimore, MD)
Rev. Dr. Terrence P. Reynolds (Herndon, VA)
Dr. Peter Senkbeil (Orange, CA)
Rev. David S. Smith (Ballwin, MO)
Rev. Dr. Glen Thomas (House Springs, MO)

All recommendations, comments, and objections regarding the candidates are to be sent to the Board of Regents' designee, Mr. Craig Olson, Chairman, Board of Regents, Concordia University, 1530 Concordia Drive West, Irvine, CA 92612. All responses and objections must be received on or before March 31 in order to be considered.

The following institutions of the Concordia University System are seeking candidates for positions:

Concordia College—New York, Bronxville, N.Y., seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **Nursing (full- and part-time); Economics and Management.**

Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Mich., seeks to fill the following position: **Director of Financial Aid.**

Concordia University, Portland, Ore., seeks to fill the following position: **Campus Pastor.**

Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Neb., seeks to fill the following position: **Director of Instructional Technology and E-Learning.**

Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis., seeks to fill the following faculty position: **Nursing.**

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."

Recovery Assistance, Inc. (RAI) Ministries of New Orleans, Louisiana, invites nominations and applications for the position of Executive Director. A successful, experienced professional is sought to lead the ministry of this dynamic disaster-response organization. Full job posting and contact information available online at www.raiministries.org/excdirector.pdf.

Anniversaries

The Lutheran Witness *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., March 20 for the May issue). Send notices to karen.higgins@lcms.org.—Ed.*

Hope, Austin, Texas, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a 10 a.m. worship service March 7. Texas District President Ken Hennings will be guest preacher. A catered dinner will follow. Contact the church office at 512-926-8574.

Redeemer, Gresham, Ore., will celebrate its 75th anniversary with 10 a.m. worship services March 21, with guest preacher Dr. James Voelz, and Rev. Paul Linnemann March 28. Each service will be followed by a reception. Contact the church office at 503-665-5414 or visit online at wheretheliturgylives.org.

Glory of Christ, Plymouth, Minn., will celebrate its 25th anniversary the weekend of March 26–28. A dinner celebration will be held March 26. A Lutheran workshop at Glory of Christ will be held March 27. A special 10:30 a.m. worship service, followed by fellowship, is planned for March 28. Visit online at www.gloryofchrist.org.

Shepherd of the Valley, Fort Bridger, Wyo., will celebrate its 25th anniversary at a 4 p.m. special worship service April 11, with a dinner to follow. Contact the church office at 307-782-6802.

St. Luke's, Houston, Texas, will celebrate its 60th anniversary with scheduled guest speakers at the 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. worship services April 18, followed by an 11:30 a.m. barbecue meal, fellowship, and open house. Contact the church office at 281-442-2180.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church and School, Kennewick, Wash., will celebrate a combined 100th anniversary May 10. Former students, parents, and members are encouraged to e-mail

(continued on page 24)

bethlehem100@gmail.com to be included in the celebration, or mail contact information to Terri Lahti, 1107 N. Arthur, Kennewick, WA 99336 by April 1.

St. Paul's Loon Lake, Vergas, Minn., will celebrate its 125th anniversary with a special 10:30 a.m. divine service May 16. Rev. Roger Sonnenberg from Arcadia, Calif., will be guest speaker. A noon meal will be served, followed by a program of music and church history.

Mount Zion, Castle Rock, Colo., will celebrate its 50th anniversary Sept. 5, with Rev. Wallace Schulz as guest speaker, followed by a luncheon. To be added to the mailing list, contact the church office at 303-688-9550 or e-mail *mtzioncastlerock@aol.com*.

Zion, Big Springs, Neb., will celebrate its 100th anniversary at the 11 a.m. service Sept. 26, followed by a noon meal and a celebration service at 2 p.m., with President Randy Golter as guest preacher. A tea reception will follow. For more information call 308-889-3650 or e-mail *dmarieb@wildblue.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

BREGE, CLIFFORD P.; May 4, 1924, Rogers City, Mich., to Dec. 31, 2009, Rogers City, Mich.; son of Paul and Theresa (Schaedig) Brege; graduated Springfield, 1954. Served 1954–1989. Ministries/parishes: Adams, Quincy, Dellwood, Wis.; Presque Isle, Bessemer, Marenisco, Frankentrost, Mich.; North Wisconsin District circuit counselor: 1961–1970; retired 1989. Survivors: Allie (Ahonon) Brege; step-daughters: Paula Jarvi, Marjorie Rafferty, Vernice Hoyt. Funeral and interment: Jan. 4, 2010, Moltke, Mich.

GOEBEL, RICHARD F.; May 29, 1936, Wausau, Wis., to Dec. 20, 2009, Maplewood, Minn.; son of Frank and Irene (Stubbe) Goebel; graduated St. Louis, 1961. Served 1961–1983. Ministries/parishes: Whittier, Calif.; Duluth, St. Paul, Minn.; Rhinelander, Jeffris, Wis.; retired 1996. Preceded in death by his wife, Betty (Weith) Goebel. Survivors: sons: Timothy, Joseph; daughters: Rebecca Harstad, Elizabeth Moldrem. Funeral and interment: Dec. 23, 2009, St. Paul, Minn.

MARSH, WILLIAM H. JR.; Sept. 19, 1919, Pine Hill, Ala., to Nov. 3, 2009, Pine Hill, Ala.; son of William Sr. and Caraline (Jones) Marsh; colloquy 1982. Served 1982–1986. Ministries/parishes: New Orleans, La.; Selma, Arlington, Thomasville, Ala. Preceded in death by his wife, Necie (Harper) Marsh. Survivors: son: Rev. Prentice; daughters: Joyce Perkins, Wilma Mason, Carolyn Peeples, Violet Johnson. Funeral: Nov. 14, 2009, Arlington, Ala.; interment: Nov. 14, 2009, Anna Manie, Ala.

POLK, JOHN CARROLL SR.; Dec. 21, 1928, Baltimore, Md., to Dec. 15, 2009, Tulsa, Okla.; son of Charles Sr. and Evelyn (Reinhardt) Polk; graduated Springfield, 1959. Served 1959–1970, 1973–1983, 1991–2006. Ministries/parishes: Lynchburg, Farmville, Va.; Cumberland, Md.; High Point, N.C.; Tulsa, Adair, Okla.; retired 2006. Survivors: Dorothy (Moeller) Polk; sons: John Jr., Stephen, Michael; daughter: Deborah Greubel. Funeral: Dec. 19, 2009, Tulsa, Okla.; interment: Dec. 19, 2009, Broken Arrow, Okla.

WANGERIN, JACK D.; Aug. 29, 1929, Milwaukee, Wis., to Dec. 25, 2009, Ridgewood, N.J.; son of Ralph and Helen (Dietz) Wangerin; graduated St. Louis, 1955. Served 1955–2005. Ministries/parishes: Fayette, Iowa; Stony Point, N.Y.; New Milford, N.J.; retired 2005. Preceded in death by his wife, Grace (Mohlenhoff) Wangerin. Survivors: son: Jeffrey; daughters: Tracy, Jody. Funeral: Dec. 29, 2009, New Milford, N.J.; interment: Dec. 29, 2009, Paramus, N.J.

WILTENBURG, ROBERT EDWARD; March 3, 1921, Brockport, N.Y., to Dec. 29, 2009, New Brunswick, N.J.; son of Rev. William and Johanna (Wind) Wiltenburg; graduated St. Louis, 1945. Served 1946–1968, 1971–1991. Ministries/parishes: Niles, Ill.; Cullman, Ala.; Astoria, New York, N.Y.; Jersey City, N.J.; retired 1991. Preceded in death by his wife, Joan (Adamson) Wiltenburg. Survivors: sons: Robert, David, Jonathan; daughter: Joy. Funeral: Jan. 2, 2010, Bound Brook, N.J.; cremation.

COMMISSIONED

ATKINSON, JANICE MARIE (BICKEL); Sept. 11, 1958, Canada, to Dec. 19, 2009, Milwaukee, Wis.; daughter of Rev. Herman and Helen Bickel; graduated Portland, 1980. Served 1981–2009. Schools/ministries: Waco, Texas; Eau Claire, Milwaukee, Wis. Survivors: Keith Atkinson; sons: Joshua, Jordan, Caleb. Funeral: Dec. 23, 2009, Brookfield, Wis.; cremation.

BAHN, NICOLE MARIE (MICEK); July 20, 1974, Columbus, Neb., to Nov. 29, 2009, North Richland Hills, Texas; daughter of William and

(continued on page 27)

Are There Different Versions of the Lord's Prayer?

When my Roman Catholic friends pray the Lord's Prayer, they do not use the concluding doxology ("For Thine is the Kingdom . . ."). Why do they omit it, while we Lutherans (and most Protestants) include the words?

As we answer this question, some background information might be helpful:

Old English translations of the Lord's Prayer (such as Tyndale's New Testament from 1534 and the King James Version from 1611) included the closing doxology as part of Matthew's text of the prayer (Matt. 6:13—Luke has a shorter version in Luke 11:2–4). Most modern English translations omit the conclusion and add a footnote explaining that early manuscript support is lacking. Teachers of the New Testament today (including LCMS) generally agree that the ascription of praise was probably not part of Matthew's original text, but was likely a later addition (though in varied forms) growing out of ancient liturgical use of the Lord's Prayer in Christian worship. They often point out that such an addition is not surprising, for Jewish prayers used in worship often ended with a statement of praise. They also call attention to ancient Christian sources that add some form of praise following the Seventh Petition, "deliver us from evil" (e.g., the *Didache*, an early Christian writing, though its date is unknown and textual transmission uncertain).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* does not include the doxology in its text of the Lord's Prayer, preferring a liturgical tradition that omits it. But the *CCC* does discuss it briefly (paragraphs 2855–56) and in a preliminary note refers to its "liturgical usage" "very early on" (2760). The *CCC* does not mention manuscript or textual issues.

Martin Luther in his German translation of the Bible retained the doxology (based on the Greek text then available to him), although he did not include it in his Small Catechism of 1529 (some editions after his death added it), nor did he discuss it in the Large Catechism.

In the LCMS, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (2005 edition) keeps what became the traditional Lutheran version of the Lord's Prayer that has the doxology. The catechism teaches that the doxology affirms the scriptural truth that God is able to answer the prayers of His people in Christ Jesus. God alone is King having "all good gifts in His control" and "the power to grant our petitions." To Him belongs "all glory" and therefore He is "worthy of our praise" (Question 235).

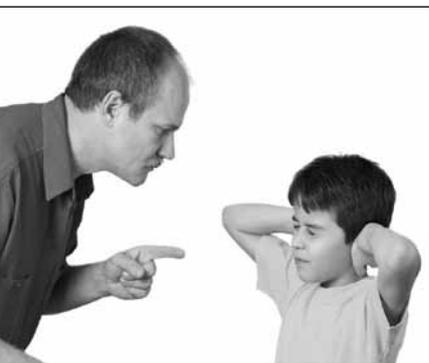
Lutherans acknowledge and respect the tradition that includes the concluding ascription of praise in the text of the Lord's Prayer. Most important, they recognize that it is perfectly

consistent with what the Holy Scriptures teach throughout concerning the nature, purpose, and importance of Christian prayer.

Until his retirement, Dr. Jerald C. Joersz was an associate executive director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

Send your questions to Q & A, *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.

How Much Control?



My husband believes that a Christian parent should have absolute control over his or her children. He has rules for everything, and he expects our children always to be perfect. I'm afraid he is damaging them. The tension at home is high, and our children are starting to rebel. What help can you offer?

Sometimes a parent feels the best way to express his or her love is by imposing rules. However, heavy-handed rules often reflect a need for absolute control. Your husband may be unwittingly placing on your children the burden of perfection that Christ has forever lifted. It is no wonder, then, that there is tension in your home.

Behavioral extremes—whether unreasonable strictness or unreasonable leniency—result in unhealthy relationships. Having unrealistic expectations can break a child's spirit and may lead to his or her giving up early in life. You've also observed that anger and rebellion often result when children feel their lives are dictated by rules and regulations. The Bible clearly warns about the danger of this dynamic: "Fathers, do not provoke your children" (Col. 3:21 ESV).

Parents can expect to be "successful" controlling their child's life only until he or she is about 11 years old. In a controlling environment, however, children often aren't allowed the decision-making opportunities that help them develop problem-solving skills. As they enter adolescence, and parents have less and less supervision, the child begins to control his or her own decisions about such things as

smoking cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol use, and sexuality. Lacking the experience in choice-making early in life, they frequently make poor decisions as teens, and into adulthood.

I firmly believe the axiom "Example is not the best teacher, it is the *only* teacher." As Christian parents, our goal is to model our faith and to provide our children with opportunities to learn good decision-making skills that will result in their making godly choices as teens and adults. Toward that end, I suggest you use the three "R's":

- a nurturing, encouraging *relationship*
- followed by flexible *rules*
- creates a *responsible*, decision-making child

A loving *relationship* with God results in observing the *rules* of the Ten Commandments, not as a set of burdensome demands, but as an internalized template, and thus we become *responsible* members of the church and of society. Similarly, a loving relationship of parent to child prepares the ground for the child to have a respectful attitude, and it increases the likelihood that they will observe a parent's reasonable guidelines. Both you and your husband can find additional insight in the book *Parenting with Love and Logic*, where your concern is specifically addressed.

Dr. Randy Schroeder is a member of the Pastoral Ministry and Missions Department at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., where he is a professor of pastoral counseling.

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.

A Terrific Insight

Amber, age 6, was sitting at the kitchen table, watching her mother rinse the dinner dishes before putting them in the dishwasher. Noticing that Mom was sporting a few strands of white hair in addition to her familiar auburn color, she asked inquisitively, "Momma, why are those hairs white?"

"Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry, or make me unhappy, one of my hairs turns white," Mom replied.

This was a new insight for Amber. She was quiet for a moment and then asked, "Momma, how come all of Grandma's hairs are white?"

—Anonymous

Pressed and Ready to Wear?

A little boy was paging through an old family Bible brought home from great-grandpa's house. Fascinated, he turned the big, sturdy pages one by one. Midway through his exploration, something slipped out of the Bible. It was a tattered leaf from a sycamore tree pressed gently between the pages. Surprised, the boy picked it up and inspected it closely.

"Mom, look what I found," he called out.

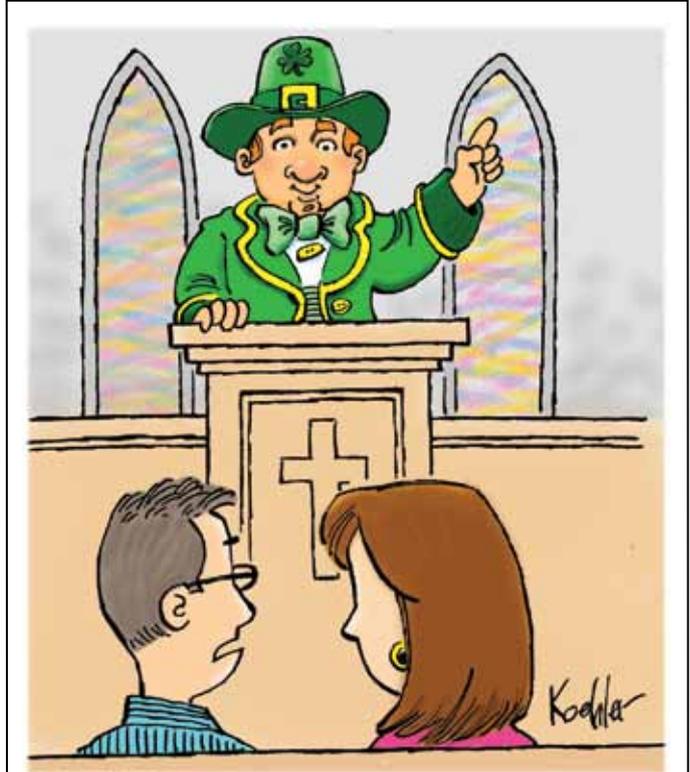
"What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked.

Still slightly astonished, he replied, "I found Adam's suit!"

—Anonymous

Pastoral Puns

- After I became a pastor and got to know the Bible, I wished we had named our boys after the first two of the three men who walked in the fiery furnace, in the book of Daniel. Then, every night, I could have called out, "Shadrach! Meshach! To-bed-you-go!"



"On the other hand, relevant preaching can sometimes go too far."

- Holy Baptism: It's never too late to do the rite thing.
- I like being a pastor and eating ice cream. You will find me either working on Sundays or working on sundaes.
- In the Christian Church, we don't make amends; because Christ did it for us, we gladly make amens.

Rev. Greg Eilers
St. John Lutheran Church
Port Hope, Mich.

NOTICES

(continued from page 24)

Christine (Smith) Micek; graduated Seward, 1998. Served 1998–2009. Schools/ministries: Arlington, Colleyville, Texas. Survivors: Matthew Bahn. Memorial service: Dec. 2, 2009, Arlington, Texas; cremation.

GASTLER, OLIVER BERNARD DR.; Aug. 14, 1929, Wellsville, Mo., to Nov. 21, 2009, Pflugerville, Texas; son of Leo and Thelma (Oliver) Gastler; graduated Seward, 1953. Served 1953–1995. Schools/ministries: Port Arthur, Austin, Texas; retired 1995. Survivors: Ruth (Meyer) Gastler; son: Greg; daughter: Connie Schmidt. Funeral and interment: Nov. 27, 2009, Pflugerville, Texas.

KUSKE, WILMER G.; Feb. 19, 1929, Minnesota, to Nov. 3, 2009, Asheville, N.C.; graduated River Forest, 1953. Served 1953–1993. Schools/ministries: Fairmont, Minn.; Levittown, Pa.; retired 1993. Survivors: Bessie (Pakan) Kuske; son: Jonathan; daughters: Sara Dahms,

Debra Kuske. Memorial services: Nov. 15, 2009, Asheville, N.C.; Nov. 27, 2009, Levittown, Pa.

PAULOS, VICTOR; June 9, 1927, Milwaukee, Wis., to Dec. 7, 2009, Waukesha, Wis.; son of Xenophon and Magdalene (Habermann) Paulos; graduated River Forest, 1949. Served 1950–1991. Schools/ministries: Houston, Texas; Milwaukee, Wis.; Monrovia, Calif.; retired 1991. Survivors: Alice (Dutschmann) Paulos; son: Philip; daughters: Lynn Patterson, Gail Darnell, Terrie Peret. Memorial service: Dec. 12, 2009, Waukesha, Wis.; interment: Dec. 12, 2009, Brookfield, Wis.

SCHMIDT, MILTON ALBERT; Jan. 14, 1924, Pottsville, Texas, to Nov. 17, 2009, St. Joseph, Mich.; son of Rev. John and Elise (Herderhorst) Schmidt; graduated Seward, 1945. Served 1945–1984. Schools/ministries: Chicago, Ill.; Ludell, Kan.; Preston, Alva,

Okla.; St. Joseph, Mich.; retired 1984. Preceded in death by his wife, Irene (Heussman) Schmidt. Survivors: sons: Steve, Brian; daughter: Marilyn Bork. Funeral and interment: Nov. 20, 2009, St. Joseph, Mich.



Palm Sunday: Jesus Shows Up

A Message for a Post-Church Culture

Several years ago, *The Lutheran Witness* printed a humorous story submitted by Rev. David R. Liefeld:

It was Palm Sunday, but because of strep throat, Sue's 3-year-old son had to stay home from church with a baby-sitter. When the family returned home carrying palm branches, he asked what they were for.

"People held them over Jesus' head as He walked by," his mother explained.

"Wouldn't you know it," the boy fumed. "The one Sunday I didn't go, Jesus showed up!"

In the addiction and treatment world there is a set of steps that guide individuals who are on a path of recovery and restoration. Step 2 is "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Two former Texas governors, Ann Richards and former president George W. Bush, each addressed personal challenges with alcohol. Anthony Hopkins, Brett Favre, Whitney Houston, Samuel L. Jackson, Betty Ford, and Stephen King also have had issues with use and abuse. All now have lives that are restored to health and sanity.

In our own lives, there are times when we conclude that we have missed Jesus' arrival. We lay sick in our beds with strep throat. We despair. Then, Jesus "shows up!" Jesus is the "power greater than ourselves" who arrives to restore us to sanity and wholeness.

Read Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, and John 12. Notice the similarities and differences in these "Palm Sunday" accounts. Palm Sunday, the day we recognize Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, often called the "Sunday of the Passion," is the day when Jesus "shows up." He rides into Jerusalem on a young donkey. His entry is hailed with sounds reminiscent of "Hail to the Chief." The crowds shout "Hosanna!" and wave palm branches.

Even before His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus "shows up" in the lives of people. In the following texts, who

were they, and how did Jesus "show up"?

Luke 19:1-10

Mark 10:13-16

John 11:17-37

John 11:38-44

Mark 10:46-52

Mr. Mister, a secular pop-culture band of the 1980s, in a chart-topping song entitled "Kyrie," asked for mercy (*Kyrie eleison*—"Lord, have mercy") over a dozen times as they portrayed the challenges associated with life's trek. Who will show up in the middle of our lives? Jesus shows up. He brings mercy and forgiveness. He enters Jerusalem and our circumstances. He comes to bring us back into a right relationship with God, with ourselves, and with our neighbor. He restores integrity, hope, our hearts, and our very lives. "Hosannas" and a triumphal donkey ride inaugurate Holy Week. Yet, the week gives way to shouts of "Crucify Him!" However, we now cry with blind Bartimaeus, "*Kyrie eleison*. Lord, have mercy!" Palm Sunday is a message of hope. He will rise!

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





'Our Beloved Synod'

'Throughout our Synod's history, we have sought to carry out the mission God has given us . . .'

For as long as I can remember, I have heard—and made—reference to “our beloved Synod.” I don’t know who first coined the phrase, but it was probably someone who said it in German: “*unsere geliebte Synode.*”

Generations of Missouri Synod Lutherans have spoken of “our beloved Synod.” Let me share some of my thoughts about why:

☼ **It is the church of our fathers and forefathers.**

What a blessing that those who founded our Synod and those who have been part of it over its 163-year history were people like you and me—people who loved the Lord Jesus and held near and dear the same matters of faith and life as we do. Together, we hold the Scriptures “as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice” and the Lutheran Confessions “as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God,” as stated in our Constitution.

☼ **We are consistent in what we believe, teach, and confess.** Last summer, I shared with delegates to our district conventions a long list of Christian doctrines on which we have little or no disagreement in our Synod. We simply are not arguing or even debating the major doctrines of the Christian faith that are in contention in many parts of the Body of Christ. We are undeniably blessed with God-given unity and harmony and have so much more that unites us than those things that would divide us!

☼ **As stated in our Constitution, we “encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in church practice, but also to develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith.”** Developing an appreciation for a variety of responsible practices and customs leads to some of the tensions experienced in the Synod, not just currently, but historically as well. So, we continue to study Scripture and the Confessions, pray for our Lord’s guidance, and seek to resolve any differences in a God-pleasing fashion.

☼ **We emphasize the grace of God.** We are saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, on account of Christ alone, as taught by Scripture alone. This is our message, the wonderful Good News that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Cor. 5:19). As Paul also writes, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8–9).

☼ **We emphasize the means of grace—that God comes to us with His undeserved love by means of His holy Word and Sacraments.** Recently, as Terry and I worshiped in an LCMS congregation in Southern California, we were privileged to witness two Baptisms. I was struck yet again by the miracle God works through plain, ordinary tap water that is “included in God’s command and combined with God’s word,” as described in the Small Catechism. Likewise, every time I receive Holy Communion, I approach the altar with reverence, joy, and thanksgiving that our Lord comes to us personally with His very body and blood, even if we cannot begin to comprehend how His body and blood are present in, with, and under bread and wine.

☼ **We focus on mission, education, and service.** “In grateful response to God’s grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities, and the world,” as our mission statement reminds us.

- Among the earliest Missouri Synod Lutherans were missionaries to Native Americans and recent immigrants. More than 100 years ago, we began mission work among African Americans in the American South and among people overseas, beginning in India.
- Our two seminaries and 10 colleges and universities are the crown jewels of our Synod. I thank God for every one of these 12 institutions.
- And, individuals in the Synod make Christ’s love known in so many circumstances. A recent example is the outpouring of love and support, in the name of Christ, for the suffering people of Haiti, a country that was impoverished even before the earthquake struck.

So we speak of “our beloved Synod,” The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: **L**utheran **C**hristians in **M**ission and **S**ervice.

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