



# THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

VOL. 128 NO. 5 MAY 2009

Engaging  
the World  
with the  
Gospel  
of Hope



A Special Focus: Pastoral Education



## Gratitude for Our Pastors

In addition to preaching and teaching matters of faith and life on the basis of God's Holy Word, pastors are called to be a part of the lives of people in good times and bad, in happy times and sad.

Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved," St. Paul assures us. And he adds this logical progression: "How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10:13–14).

Over the years, I have been influenced by numerous LCMS pastors, including the one who baptized and confirmed me, my campus pastor at Texas A&M University, and the pastors who supervised my seminary fieldwork in Nokomis, Ill., and my vicarage in Charlotte, N.C. I've also been influenced by the pastors in Austin and Houston at whose schools I taught fourth grade before I went to the seminary, as well as by a number of district and Synod presidents.

Each of these pastors had unique strengths, gifts, and abilities. Most were as different from the others as night is from day. Yet somehow our gracious God enabled each of them to use his gifts in ways that brought people to know and believe what you and I do—that "there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), that of Jesus, who said, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

With the assistance of faculty and staff from our two seminaries, 35 district presidents, five Synod vice presidents, and I took part last month in assigning seminary students and pastoral candidates to congregations for their vicarages and first placements as pastors. This is one of the annual highlights of my ministry.

Young (and not-so-young) men, many of them married and with children, respond each year to the divine calling to serve the Lord of the Church in the pastoral ministry of the LCMS. They come from all walks of life, with varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. In common, though, is a burning desire to represent the one true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and, in the words of our Synod's mission statement, "vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities, and the world."

These men, their spouses, and their families make a significant commitment when they go to the seminary. The cost of a four-year seminary education, not including personal living expenses, is about \$200,000 per student. Some of these expenses are borne by the student and his

family. Some are provided by his congregation, his district, the national Synod, seminary endowments, and generous donors from congregations of our Synod who support the cause of seminary education in the LCMS.

The return on this investment, though, is priceless. While members of congregations may not always totally agree with or appreciate everything their pastor says or does, the relationship between a pastor and parishioners is quite significant.

In addition to preaching and teaching matters of faith and life on the basis of God's Holy Word, pastors are called to be a part of the lives of people in good times and bad, in happy times and sad. In some cases, a pastor knows things about a person that only a parent or spouse—or no one else—may know. The relationship between a pastor and people brings consolation, comfort, encouragement, affirmation, admonition, and help in time of need.

So, I offer my thanks and appreciation to all who are in any way involved in pastoral formation—the students; their wives, children, parents, and grandparents; seminary professors and staff; home pastors and supervising pastors; seminary boards of regents; development officers; the Council of Presidents; the Synod's Board of Directors and Board for Pastoral Education; and many others.

As I shake the hand of each seminary graduate who receives a call at our annual seminary placement services, I thank God for the excellent system of pastoral education with which He has blessed us. And I pray that each man whose hand I shake will experience a lifetime of being a blessing to many as he serves, leads, preaches, teaches, encourages, and models the love of Christ among His people.

**Jerry Kieschnick**  
John 3:16–17

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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: Pastoral Education

## To the Reader

As with the past few May issues of *The Lutheran Witness*, you hold in your hands a magazine dedicated principally to the topic of pastoral formation and education, and to the important work our pastors do among us.

As Vicar Andrew Yeager, a student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, points out in his story about his vicarage experiences in Lawton, Okla., pastors come in all shapes and sizes, and they are endowed with a variety of gifts and skills from our heavenly Father. No pastor, it might be said, brings exactly the same gifts to his calling as another. Yet, each is committed joyfully to serve his Lord, his church, and the great gift we have through our Savior Jesus, the Gospel of hope.

Also, this issue highlights our Synod's new Specific Ministry Pastor program and the exciting new ways in which our seminaries engage their students, whether on campus or beyond.

Finally, throughout this issue, there is another theme, too: We also as redeemed children are called to share the Good News in our own lives, whether with youngsters in foster care, neighbors in a book club, our friends in a coffeehouse, or our colleague at work. The world is hungry for that Good News, and we, too, have the privilege of sharing it.

*James H. Heine, Editor*  
The Lutheran Witness

### About the cover:

Dave Ficken, a student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, finds that his work as a Starbucks "barista" complements his studies and helps him understand how to reach out to people with the good news of the Gospel. See his story on page 16. Our photo was taken at Crave, the coffeehouse ministry of Christ in the City Lutheran Church in midtown St. Louis.

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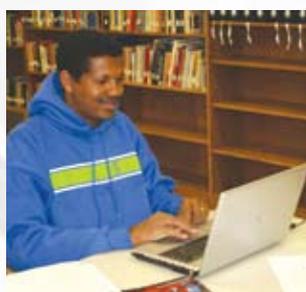
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## On the Web

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At our own Web site this month, find these Web-exclusive stories at [lcms.org/witness](http://lcms.org/witness). Click on the link for “Web-Exclusive Stories.”

- Would St. Paul Work at Starbucks? Going Where the People Are

- What Do You Crave?
- Pastors Are People, Too

For more information about our Synod’s Pastoral Education Month, visit [lcms.org/pastoraleducation](http://lcms.org/pastoraleducation). Also at this Web address, you can find helpful spiritual resources for both personal and corporate use. Simply click on “Lifelong Learning” and then “Theological Resources.”

# Fixed on Eternity

**O**n a Thursday in May, about 2 a.m., I was a new nurse working the night shift in the neonatal intensive-care unit (NICU) of a local hospital. I was struggling to stay awake when word came that we would receive an admission. Perhaps to prove myself, I offered to take it.

An admission to a NICU is an ordeal. The baby generally comes straight from delivery, and its prognosis often changes from minute to minute. When I learned that my new baby's mom was a drug user and suffering from complications brought on by an addict's lifestyle, the child's prognosis became grim. I prepared myself for a night of life support and interventions. I assumed that, come morning, I would leave while the baby remained.



The transport team arrived with the baby already ventilated. He was small and bloated. His head seemed abnormally shaped. Everything switched into overdrive. Doctors yelled orders. We began "working him up"—drugs, IVs, blood, you name it.

We tried and tried. Finally, however, the doctors called it: This kid is not going to make it—too much pressure in-utero, too small, too sick. Life support over. We can do nothing more. And everything stopped.

It was my responsibility to return the baby to Labor and Delivery so that Mom could hold him while he died. We arrived in Mom's room to find her in serious pain, still medicated, and probably not all that coherent. The doctor explained the situation. She was upset but naturally lethargic. Mom held the baby for a minute but was in too much pain to hold him any longer.

In an effort to console Mom, the doctor offered to have the chaplain baptize the baby. From all appearances, Mom didn't know much about Baptism. Her response: basically, "Whatever."

Because she was too tired to hold him, I held him as the water was poured over his head and he was baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of

the Holy Spirit." This sacramental act put my mind at ease. I knew the baby—Landon—even though he was going to die, was now a child of God.

Now, generally, a dying infant is surrounded by tearful family members, held until the end, loved until his last breath. But there seemed no family for Landon, no father, no aunts or uncles, no grandparents. Mom was tired and didn't want to hold him, so she sent him back with me to the NICU.

When we returned, I asked my charge nurse, "What now?"

"You hold him for as long as he remains living," she said.

And so I held Landon—wrapped in a little blanket—breathing regular, though labored. He couldn't have been more than four pounds.

**Because she was too tired to hold him, I held him as the water was poured over his head and he was baptized 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' This sacramental act put my mind at ease. I knew the baby—Landon—even though he was going to die, was now a child of God.**

It was about 3 a.m. now. I sat in a dark room in a rocking chair and held him. It was the greatest privilege I have ever had, to be the one who loved him for the last hour of his life.

And he kept breathing, for an hour and a half. Sometimes it looked as if he had stopped. We'd check his sounds, listen for a heartbeat. It would be there. So I held him and kept rocking. Finally, though, about 4:30 a.m. on Ascension Day, Landon died in my arms.

I didn't feel sad. I didn't feel relieved. I felt at peace. Everyone asked me, "Are you okay?" I said, "Yeah." And really, I meant it.

Later I wrote this:

"A baby died in my arms. I don't even know how I feel about that. Death—dying in Christ, hoping in Christ, peace in Christ. At the end of the day, if Christ has not been raised, there is no point to life. But Christ has been raised. That is my reason for living. That is my glory. There I can rest. That is why Landon's life has meaning. That is why there is meaning."

**A registered nurse, Amanda Chew is a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Olivette, Mo.**



# LETTERS

## Making music

I can't remember an issue of *The Lutheran Witness* I've enjoyed as much as your March 2009 offering. I grew up in the WELS and joined the LCMS as a young adult. I've been active in church music in some form for my entire ministry. I'm in the music ministry today because my fifth-grade teacher at a Lutheran school, who was the choir director and organist, took the time to mentor me and encourage my interest in church music.

I didn't have the opportunity the young adults have now at Lutheran Summer Music. It's wonderful to see that, in an age when digital reproduction and performance of music is popular, we still

of music, a desire to share that with others, and, in so doing, to bring glory to God, obeying Jesus' command in Matt. 5:16: "Let your light shine before men."

They do, indeed, shine brightly, and all the more so because of that shared experience. May it succeed greatly!

I wish that such enthusiasm for organ music was the case here, where, after playing organ for various churches for over 46 years, I have been told that people don't want to hear organ music anymore. Our new vicar is trying to change that, but our church leaders prefer modern tunes.

Please convey my sincerest wishes to the musicians—that they

blessing for me to be an organist in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for 53 years now, but my greatest pleasure has been to nurture upcoming young organists, three of whom are being nurtured right now—the youngest, 12 years of age.

May God bless all those involved in music ministry in all church congregations!

Annette Newton Haas  
Our Savior Lutheran Church  
Burlington, Wis.

I was quite surprised that the March *Lutheran Witness* cover pictured a young musician in front of a traditional pipe organ. I really didn't see anything in the issue about producing young keyboardists, drummers, reggae, and hip-hop artists for today's church, let alone tomorrow's. Classical organ has been great for a long time, but it's no longer reaching people for Jesus Christ where I live and worship.

Roger Johnson  
Jehovah—El Buen Pastor  
Lutheran Church  
Chicago, Ill.

## Moved to tears

I had to e-mail you immediately after reading Susan Rosselli's March Lifeline story, "God Hears, God Cares, God Moves." I was moved to tears upon reading about her struggle to secure the basics for her and her then 9-year-old daughter during a difficult time in their lives. It was such an unbelievably compelling article to read how our Lord answered her prayer by blessing them in the midst of a bad snow storm and then providing them with a meal by a stranger—then to read how things began to "slowly pick up" for Susan, her husband, and her daughter by blessing the family with employment, a new church home, a house, and a more stable life. What an amazing testimony to our Lord's compassionate love and grace!

Thank you, Susan, for sharing your story, especially with so many today experiencing the same



Please convey my sincerest wishes to the musicians—that they enjoy long, satisfying careers, especially Whitney Sabrowsky, since she has the same enthusiasm for the organ that I had at her age.

Roger Littge, M.D.  
Davis, Calif.

take the time to nurture youth who have a heart for church music. The comment by Dr. Reed Lessing on page 8 of the March issue is so true: "When biblical truth and doctrine are set to music, they become devotional, memorable, teachable, and transformational."

Thanks again for an encouraging issue.

David Hagen  
Horicon, Wis.

Thank you so much for your article in the March *Lutheran Witness*, "Nurturing Tomorrow's Church Musicians." It was very heartwarming to learn about the enthusiasm and energy with which the staff and youthful participants joined their efforts in the Lutheran Summer Music (LSM) program. They brought a great deal of sincere love

enjoy long, satisfying careers, especially Whitney Sabrowsky, since she has the same enthusiasm for the organ that I had at her age. My hope is that the staff and supporters of LSM continue to encourage and refine the skills and talents of so many fine young people who love their Lord.

Roger Littge, M.D.  
Davis, Calif.

I would like to say "God bless you" for your March 2009 issue of *The Lutheran Witness* in which you highlighted music ministry and the nurturing of tomorrow's church musicians, the reference to the list of the 288 Levitical musicians, and the mention of the great composer, J.S. Bach.

It has been an honor and a

challenges you did. May they, too, come to know the faithfulness of our gracious God, as you did!

*Mrs. Mildred M. Palmer  
Lynnwood, Wash.*

## ***A winsome presence***

I was very heartened by Diane Strzelecki's March article about LCMS Lutherans at Harvard. My own time at Yale Divinity School confirmed a similar situation there: It, too, is "not the hotbed of pagan activity" that many believe it to be. LCMS students at Yale (there were five LCMS students in the divinity school alone while I was there) would benefit from similar efforts to organize a campus ministry in their midst—and the LCMS also benefits from such a winsome presence at the country's most prestigious places of higher learning!

In this regard, I'm sure the old tradition would still hold true: Harvard may do it first, but Yale can do it better!

*Rev. Travis Scholl, Managing Editor  
Theological Publications  
Concordia Seminary  
St. Louis, Mo.*

## ***Cover to cover***

I enjoyed reading your March issue cover to cover. Many times I merely glance at *The Lutheran Witness*. However, the March issue fascinated me, especially the stories behind the music of Bach and Mendelssohn. The article on the beginning of a campus ministry at one of the most prestigious universities in the country was also uplifting. And kudos also to our Synod president for being present and standing tall in favor of the unborn in Washington.

My prayer daily is that all Christians, regardless of denomination, confess their sins and remain firm in their God-given faith during every day of their lives, that we remain focused on the cross of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

*John Barichivich Jr.  
Zachary, La.*

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



*Ablaze!*

For Abused and  
Neglected Children:  
**‘Validation that  
Someone Cares’**

Every week Mike Permenter drove 45 minutes to the Nelson Children's Center in Denton, Texas, to join 14-year-old Tim for checkers, *Battleship*, and other board games that, Permenter says, "would make my own kids roll their eyes."

The mentor and young teen tackled "no heavy spiritual discussions" during their time together at the Lutheran Social Services (LSS) residential treatment center for children with behavioral and emotional problems caused by severe neglect and abuse. But over the months, Permenter was pleased to see Tim gradually become "a happier, shoulders-back, chest-out guy."

This spring, just before Tim (whose name has been changed to protect his privacy) moved from Nelson into a foster home, the youngster received God's gifts in Christ through Baptism. His mentor signed Tim's baptismal card.

"These are the most front-line spiritual consequences I have ever been involved with," said Permenter, a member of St. Peter Lutheran Church, Roanoke, about Nelson's spiritual-care program. "It's not those board games that matter so much. For these kids, it's the validation that someone cares."

The Nelson Center's voluntary spiritual-care program is one example of what LSS President and CEO Dr. Kurt Senske calls "the value added" in the help, healing, and hope offered to troubled youngsters.

"This is what makes us unique from almost every other children's center in Texas," Senske said. "Over the years, our experience has shown us, and we deeply believe, that no child can be truly healed unless he is cared for emotionally, physically, and spiritually."

A total of 165 children are served daily at Nelson and LSS' two other residential treatment centers in Texas—Krause (in Katy) and New Life (in Canyon Lake). Their ages range from six to 17. Most have been removed from their homes because of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, often at the hands of once-trusted adults. Because of that abuse, each child struggles with low self-esteem, anger, or other behavioral and emotional problems—wounds that hurt long after bones and bruises have healed.

In 2006, LCMS World Relief and Human Care provided a \$30,000 seed grant for deaconesses to serve as spiritual-care directors at the treatment centers. Since then, "Miss Ruth" (Deaconess Ruth Drum at Nelson) and "Miss April" (Deaconess April Bishop at Krause) have guided spiritual care that goes hand in hand with physical, emotional, and educational therapies. Typically, the deaconesses are among the first staff members young residents get to know as a person who cares about them.

"The children are usually pretty quick to come to us, whether they need someone to listen or to tell them whom to go to for something they need, like clothing," said Bishop. "Many times, they just want someone to tell how scared and hurt they are."

As they get acquainted, the deaconesses inform youngsters about spiritual-care opportunities—e.g., youth groups, Bible studies, chapel services. Participation is voluntary, but most children are drawn to at least one activity.

Even those who reject invitations to Bible study or youth groups seek the spiritual-care directors for one-on-ones that can be heart-wrenching.

"These kids are filled with bad memories and anxiety," Drum said. "In our conversations, we look for opportunities to share God's unconditional love, and for them to learn they are God's dearly beloved children. We try to give them hope, helping them know that someone bigger and stronger really does love them."

As a longtime volunteer and Bible-study leader at Krause, Art Thomas has seen young lives touched by God's



Opposite: volunteers at the Nelson and Krause centers serve as mentors and prayer pals, get to know youngsters on special work days, and help young ladies get ready for special dances. Right: Deaconess Ruth Drum uses a "creation globe" to share the story of God's creation at Lutheran Social Services' Nelson's Children Center in Denton, Texas.



Left: A volunteer helps a young resident at the Krause Children's Center in Katy, Texas, with final touches before the center's prom.

Right: Deaconess April Bishop is one of the first people new residents meet at the Krause Children's Center. Many times, Bishop says, youngsters "just want someone to tell how scared and hurt they are."



Word. One of the most remarkable, he says, was Marsha, a teen who called her parents devil worshippers.

Marsha (whose name also is changed for privacy reasons) initially ignored Thomas when he invited her to his weekly Bible study. "She was very bitter, but, finally, she agreed to have a cookie with us," said Thomas, a member of Memorial Lutheran Church, Katy. Eventually, he says, Marsha became a Bible-study regular who seriously studied Scripture.

As she prepared to leave Krause around age 18, Marsha asked her Bible-study teacher to pray for an opportunity that would allow her to live independently and look for a job. "She said she knew she could never go back to her parents," Thomas said.

Like Art Thomas, many volunteers who lead Bible lessons, serve as mentors and prayer pals, and plan holiday parties, are members of area Lutheran churches. They serve children who may not always seem appreciative, Drum says. But the time and attention of caring Christians does make a difference.

"The kids are smart enough to know that I get paid to be here, but these volunteers are not getting paid and don't have to be here," Drum said. "That makes a big difference."

Each treatment center strives to equip children to deal with their painful pasts, change destructive behaviors, and successfully transition into new homes—foster, adoptive, or, sometimes, with their own families. Spiritual care provides an opportunity to learn about one life-changing tool—God's love.

Echoing an expression used by Permenter, Senske speaks of "front lines" when he describes the opportunity to touch the souls of youngsters who, in most cases, come from dysfunctional, unchurched homes. "When we talk about reaching out through *Ablaze!*, few probably think about these children," he said. "But April and Ruth are on the front lines of sharing the Good News of Jesus."

About a year ago, three young boys who had become friends at Nelson asked to be baptized together. Drum recalls praying with the boys in the chapel and sensing how they, like so many children at the center, seemed to crave "these sacred times and places that are so wonderful for their souls and minds."

The deaconess admits that most days a visitor would note few signs of spiritual transformations. But she believes that staff and volunteers who provide spiritual care plant seeds of faith.

Permenter says he watched those seeds grow in Tim. Considering the teen's troubled past, he should be "on the streets, on drugs, or even dead by now," Permenter said. Instead, when Tim left the Nelson Center for a foster home, his former mentor says he had no doubt the youngster was better equipped for life today—and for eternity.

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



Dr. Kurt Senske

### Two Ways to Share Healing and Hope

More than half the children who leave the Nelson

and Krause children's centers transition into foster homes. To ensure their healing and hope continues, Christian foster families are urgently needed.

Noting that May is "Foster Care Month," LSS President and CEO Dr. Kurt Senske says the demand for foster families is greater than ever. About 650 LSS foster families now serve some 940 children in foster homes in Texas.

Another big need: financial support. Because laws forbid state funds to cover the cost of spiritual-care programs, LSS depends on generous donors to fund opportunities to share God's love with hurting, mostly unchurched youngsters.

To learn more about foster care, giving opportunities, or other ways you can help children in the name of Jesus through LSS, please visit [www.lsss.org](http://www.lsss.org) or call (800) 938-5777. —KPK

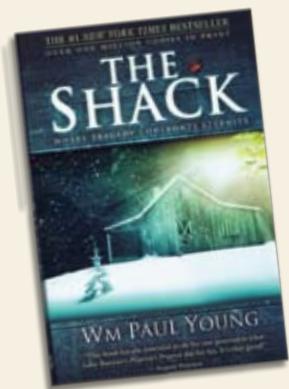
***The Shack* is a publishing blockbuster and a cultural phenomenon. What are we to make of this exercise in 'Christian' fiction? A Lutheran pastor takes a look.**

# Hack *The Shack*?

**A**s a Los Angeles Lakers fan, I remember with delight the three championships we won with Shaquille O'Neal. During his time in LA, opponents could barely contain the NBA's "Superman." Like Superman, however, O'Neal had one weakness. His kryptonite was free throws. The big man who did almost everything well often looked foolish at the foul line. Opponents, therefore, employed a tactic dubbed "Hack a Shaq." They would purposely foul him to expose his weakness.

More recently, a similar tactic has been used on a book of Christian (although some vigorously dispute that characterization) fiction that made a fast break to the number-one position on the *New York Times* bestseller list last summer and, with more than 6 million copies in print, has remained there.

*The Shack* is a visceral, moving story about redemption in a deeply broken world, and regardless of how one defines it, is being bought or borrowed by multitudes in Lutheran pews across the country. My first Bible-study class on the book ran more than three hours and failed to exhaust the conversation. I've made presentations to book clubs, circuit pastoral conferences, and other congregations, where the reception has been equally intense.



*The Shack* is a visceral, moving story about redemption in a deeply broken world, and regardless of how one defines it, is being bought or borrowed by multitudes in Lutheran pews across the country. My first Bible-study class on the book ran more than three hours and failed to exhaust the conversation.

Pastors and theologians, as I've noted, are divided on merits of *The Shack*. From a Lutheran Christian perspective, there are substantial doctrinal problems with the book, but does that mean it's not worth reading as a novel—as a contemporary, and influential, work of fiction?

Some have employed a “Hack *The Shack*” approach, exposing the book's weaknesses, but saying little about its merits. Others, of course, have endorsed it heartily, without even a nod to some of its significant theological shortcomings.

### An Autobiographical Journey

*The Shack* was written by William Paul Young, who grew up as a missionary kid in New Guinea. Young was sexually abused as a boy, which left him emotionally and spiritually handicapped. Shortly after Young married, he committed adultery. It was then that he was forced to deal with the issues in his life. *The Shack* is really about how God deals with the sin and pain in our lives. In that sense, the book is more autobiographical than doctrinal.

Young wrote *The Shack* for his children with no intention of publishing it. Eventually, he sent the manuscript to a number of publishers, without success. With the help of some friends, he published the book himself, initially spending only \$300 on marketing. Young describes the book's radical success as “something God is doing.”

The story of *The Shack* mirrors Young's own experiences of loss and redemption. The novel centers on a character named Mackenzie, who deals with the loss of his young child, Missy. After Missy's death, Mack is overcome by a “Great Sadness” and is very angry at God. A breakthrough occurs, when, by God's initiative, Mack is invited to meet the Holy Trinity at the place where Missy's body was found: in an abandoned shack in the dense forest of north-eastern Oregon.

This premise of the book strikes a deep chord with many Christians. The abandoned shack is a metaphor for the hurt in our lives. It's that place where we experienced our deepest pain and where we hide our sin and shame. Though we try to avoid our own shacks, God in His mercy invites us to this place of pain for honest confession, grace, and healing.

This is what separates *The Shack* from most of the popular Christian works published today. Unlike *The Promise* or *The Prayer of Jabez*, which pedal a gospel of prosperity, *The Shack* deals with life under the cross and is not afraid to venture into the deep mysteries of faith. Admittedly, Young has trouble swimming in such deep waters, but that he has Christians exploring such doctrines as the Holy Trinity, the person and work of Christ, and the problem of sin and evil in our world is commendable. Indeed, if we examine the book in the light of Holy Scripture, five major themes appear, revealing both the book's strengths and weaknesses.

### The Holy Trinity

One of the shocking moments of the book is when Mack meets all three persons of the Trinity. Even if you have not read the book, you might have heard that the Father, called Papa, is depicted as an African American woman (though he changes appearances toward the end). As a gourmet chef, he creates. Jesus appears as himself, and looks like a Middle Eastern man, with “no beauty . . . to attract us to him” (Is. 53:2 NIV). Dressed as a carpenter, he serves. The Holy Spirit appears as an Asian woman. As a gardener, she nurtures. Young fully develops each person and creates some memorable interactions between them. At the same time, God/Papa clearly states that he is one essence, and freely refers to himself as both “we” and “I.”

There are serious problems in Young's depic-

tion, however. Because he tries carefully not to give the impression that the three persons are three different gods (a difficult assignment when writing fiction), he ends up minimizing the uniqueness of each person in order to emphasize God's unity. For example, the Father talks about himself becoming human, and is depicted as having nail marks on his hands. Further, Young's Jesus never uses his own divinity but must instead rely on the Father's divine power. Finally, and perhaps most troubling, Young robs Jesus of what He fully accomplished in redemption, suggesting that the Father didn't damn the Son on the cross, but instead remained with Him, which clearly contradicts Jesus' cry from the cross: "My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34). Gal. 3:13 clearly states: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'"

## Relationships

Young describes beautifully that humanity was created for loving relationships, and that the Holy Trinity is the source for such intimate fellowship with God and one another (see John 17:25–26). This is a profound insight: All love flows from the three persons, who relate to one another in perfect unity as one essence. God is love. Therefore, the Father invites Mack to call him "Papa," a clear reference to the Aramaic *Abba* ("Daddy") found in Rom. 8:15.

At the same time, Young clearly has a strong bias against institutions because, he says, they are based on power and not love. He criticizes government, as well as the church. While he correctly points out the abuse of serving institutions over people, Young takes this to the extreme. He has Jesus claiming that institutions are not His creation nor His will. This clearly conflicts with a Lutheran understanding of the two kingdoms (see Matt. 16:16–20 and Rom. 13:1–2). It's important to note that Young claims no church affiliation. This is unfortunate, not only because he has

separated himself from Christ's Body, but also in that he has distanced himself from the wisdom of pastors and elders who could have helped him with the doctrinal problems in his book!

## Salvation

There is much debate on whether Young defends salvation by grace through faith on account of Christ. Sometimes this is clearly stated, while at other times his language is ambiguous. When interviewed, Young rebuts any claims of universalism and defends the centrality of Christ's redemption. In the book, Papa does state that everything points to Jesus, and only through Him is the world reconciled. Indeed, God's unconditional love on account of Christ is the major message of the book. Conspicuously absent, however, is the idea of God's wrath and judgment. God doesn't seem to get angry at sin or to judge it, and the book doesn't deal with those who don't come to faith. The devil is not mentioned, nor is hell. In fairness to Young, his central character is a Christian, so such matters might be beyond the scope of the novel.

## The Means of Grace

Encountering God is the major literary device that propels the novel forward. Young speaks of an incarnational God who is willing to limit Himself to interact with humanity. Indeed, that Young has the Father and Spirit hide in temporary corporal bodies to meet with Mack is not unlike some of God's appearances in the Old Testament as a stranger to Abraham or a wrestler with Jacob. Largely absent, though, is the means of grace as the place where we meet God. The Spirit is weakly connected to the Word of God on several occasions, and the Lord's Supper subtly appears before a key event in the book. Most of the time, however, Young has the Holy Spirit acting apart from the means of grace. He maligns Christians for overemphasizing Scripture and instead emphasizes visions and dreams as the place to hear God's voice.



The premise of the book strikes a deep chord with many Christians. The abandoned shack is a metaphor for the hurt in our lives. It's that place where we experienced our deepest pain, and where we hide our sin and shame.

### Freedom in Christ

Young does an excellent job of differentiating between a life led by the sinful nature and a new life lived in Christ. Sin is described as independence from God—a rebellion against His will to follow our own. Thus, the Ten Commandments are chiefly a mirror to show us our sin. Even though God can bring good out of the evils of sinful humanity, He is not the source of this evil. Conversely, Young depicts sanctification as true freedom in Christ. Since the Law has no ability to produce good works in us, we are set free to live in the grace that God provides. Young would have us throw away our WWJD bracelets and instead live our lives as branches connected to Christ, our Vine.

### Hack or Back?

There is much more to explore in *The Shack*, such as faith, forgiveness, fellowship, marriage, vocation, and heaven. In the end, Lutheran pastors and congregations are left with this question: Do we hack or back *The Shack*? Perhaps it is helpful to remember that Young set out to compose a story, and not a systematic treatise, about God. It isn't meant to replace our Catechism. So, if this tale sparks conversation among Christians, causing us to explore its claims in light of Holy Scripture, then, perhaps, *The Shack* is a modern novel worthy of our consideration.

**Rev. Steven B. Borst is senior pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Riverside, Calif.**



# Engaging the World with the Gospel of Hope

The pages that follow vividly describe the efforts of our future pastors and our seminaries to communicate to the world the only true source of eternal hope, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**H**ave you ever considered spending your vacation at a monastery? Christian monasteries throughout the world offer opportunities for visitors to escape from their everyday routines. Advertising for these monastic experiences contains pictures of peaceful surroundings and encourages prospective guests to retreat from the pressures and worries of the world in order to engage in worship, study, and quiet reflection. It sounds wonderful, and there is certainly much to be gained from such an experience.

Our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod seminaries in Fort Wayne and St. Louis are not monasteries, and those being prepared for pastoral ministry there are not engaging in a monastic retreat. To be sure, worship, study, and quiet reflection take place on the seminary campuses, and they are essential components of pastoral formation. Yet, these students are not interested in retreating from the world. They are interested in fervently engaging the world with the Gospel of hope.

The pages that follow vividly describe the efforts of our future pastors and our seminaries to communicate to the world the only true source of eternal hope, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Seminarian David Ficken provides examples of his passionate Gospel engagement of the people he meets while working at Starbucks. Vicar Andrew Yeager, from Baltimore, details how he learned to relate the hope of the Gospel to people in the very different surroundings of Oklahoma. Two students in the new Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program, a program that allows students to stay in their mission contexts while being formed for pastoral ministry, describe their experiences in Gospel engagement.

Apart from their students, our seminaries vigorously engage the world through the online theological resources they offer in electronic format. Audio files, video files, and manuscripts are downloaded tens of thousands of times each week by people around the world. Only the Lord of the Church knows how many people have been reached by the Gospel conveyed through these amazing means.

All are blessings from God—the people featured in the following pages and the means they employ to engage the world. Yet, it would be a mistake to emphasize the people and the means while ignoring the message itself—the Gospel of hope. This hope is sure and certain, for Jesus Christ is its source. It is unchangeable, for it is grounded in the words and promises of God. It is a living hope, for He who once died for the sins of the world now lives and reigns to all eternity, and we with Him!

As Peter was inspired to write: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:3–4 ESV).

**Dr. Glen Thomas is the executive director of the LCMS Board for Pastoral Education.**



## From Seminary to Starbucks—and Beyond

Living with the Gospel in church is often comfortable. Living with the Gospel beyond the church doors is often less so.



**H**ave you ever been asked a tough question that you didn't know the answer to? Have you ever been put on the spot with a question about your faith, where you found yourself fumbling for a response? You know, something like, "If God is all powerful, and all loving, how can He let people go to hell?"

Chances are you have been in a situation where, whether it is about your faith or not, you have been asked a question that made your confidence sink and your comfort level wane because you couldn't reply with a swift, certain answer.

I am a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. I also work at a local Starbucks. While the seminary has been teaching me many, many things in the classroom and on campus, I have a unique opportunity to keep learning while serving lattes and cappuccinos, often to people who have never been on a seminary campus or, in some cases, inside a church building. It is through my conversations with these people that God is teaching me how to reach the lost with His Good News.

So, yes, you guessed it. There is no shortage of faith-filled questions that come my way, or opportunities to find myself bereft of a swift answer. But these occasions have also taught me a few guidelines as important as instantly having the right answer—guidelines that might speak louder than my words.

**Opposite:** Dave Ficken enjoys a coffee with Margaret Walsh at Crave, the coffeehouse of Christ in the City Lutheran Church. Ficken initially met Walsh, a City of St. Louis judge, through his work at Starbucks. Eventually, they connected again after a worship service offered by Ficken's field-education congregation, St. John, Ellisville, Mo.

**Below:** Walsh and Ficken with Donna Green, manager of Crave.

built between us, I can ask her a question as deep as, "If you were to be approached by a Christian who wanted to share his or her faith with you, what kind of person would you want that to be?"

Without hesitation, she said, "Someone like you, someone I could trust. Someone who I know won't shove a Bible down my throat without any consideration for who I am as a person. I'm not a target."

## Remember Our Calling

Many times we shy away from opportunities to share our faith because there seems so much uncertainty and discomfort involved—a question we cannot answer, a belief we do not know how to respond to, a consequence we do not want to face. But God doesn't call us to live within our comfort zone. Instead, the Holy Spirit guides us in all situations, whether they are comfortable or not. "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:7-8).

**Dave Ficken is completing his second year of studies at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His home congregation is Trinity Lutheran Church, Lisle, Ill.**



## Lean on the Promises of God

There is a reason God tells us to lean on His Spirit. This is where we are given the strength, the words, and the guidance for sharing His Good News. This is essential for you and me as we share our faith. God equips you and gives you situations to share His love, even when you don't think you can handle it.

For example, over the past several months I have become acquainted with one of my regular "drive thru" customers. An inactive Christian (perhaps my best way to describe him), he knows that I am a seminary student. Recently, after I had not seen him for a while, I asked how he was doing. He told me his father had been diagnosed with bone cancer. He asked me to pray for him. Several days later he came through the drive-thru again. "Dave! It worked," he said. Not quite sure what he was referring to, I asked, "What worked?"

Without hesitation, he replied, "Your prayers! They worked! My dad's cancer isn't nearly as severe as they said it would be!" God promises to hear our prayers and tells us that our prayers are powerful and effective. Lean on those promises and trust that He is leading you.

## Live Life Authentically with Others

Do things with others, non-Christians included, outside of the normal context in which you meet them. Hang out after work. Talk about things other than school if you are a student.

I saw this unfold during a Tuesday-night service organized by my field-education church at a popular local microbrewery and pub. One of my regular customers attended. We spotted each other. She said, "Hey, you're the barista!" I said, "Hey, you're the Triple Grande Nonfat No-Foam Latte!" Multiple conversations later she came to hear me preach at my field-education church and now regularly asks about my progress in school. Our relation-

ship has grown so that we can regularly encourage each other in our faith.

## Leave the Door Open for Further Opportunity

Many times we think that sharing Christ is a one-shot deal. Truth is, when someone is part of your "sphere of influence," you are going to continue interacting with him or her, and you will probably have more than one opportunity to share Christ.

A Starbucks colleague started asking questions about my Christian faith a few months ago. She firmly stated her disbelief in the same God I believe in. Her strong opinion could have been taken to be offensive. However, because I knew it wasn't going to be the last time we talked, we agreed to disagree. Since then, we have had more conversations about what she believes, what I believe, what the Bible teaches, and how all of that intersects in our lives. If I had taken offense during our first serious conversation and fired back, attacking her beliefs, we would not be having those conversations. In fact, because there is now a level of trust





Vicars are not pastors yet, but the vicarage year is a great and valuable time for the formation of a pastor. Vicars serve as they learn, and in doing so, they learn how to serve.

## Vicarage: Countless Opportunities to Learn—and Share

From seminary student to vicar is a big step, but it's a step you do not take alone. And it is an incredible learning experience.



As I stood shoulder-to-shoulder with some of my closest friends in a dimly lit sanctuary, waiting for our names to be read from the list of vicarage placements, I anxiously wondered about the church and the location that would be paired with my name. Where would I be assigned? What would it be like? Would I fit in? Would I succeed—or fail?

Perhaps I should tell you a little about myself. I was born in Baltimore, Md., where my parents raised me to love city life. To me, the bustle of city streets, the cosmopolitan commingling of cultures, the endless list of varying types of coffee—it's all invigorating. Recently, I married my wife, Heather, and she graciously agreed to leave her small town (Caro, Mich.) to join me at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne—in the city.

*Now, for the next year, where would be our home?*

My friends went before me: California, Florida, Wisconsin, Louisiana—and then I got the news: “Andrew Yeager, St. John Lutheran Church, Lawton, Okla.”

Needless to say, I was surprised. Oklahoma? I had never even been to a state that borders the state of Oklahoma. I had never been west of the Mississippi. I didn't own a pair of cowboy boots. The closest I had ever come to a buffalo was in burger form. Could I really do this?

But through the many kindnesses and encouraging words we received upon arrival, I quickly learned that Lawton was a wonderful place to be prepared further for my life's work. By serving St. John's, I've learned that churches can be as different as the people in them: They face different challenges, share different talents, are called to do their work in different fields.

**At left: Vicar Andrew Yeager meets with his supervisor, Rev. Richard Mayer, pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Lawton, Okla.**

Lawton is the site of Fort Sill, the U.S. Army's massive field-artillery school. St. John sees families come and go as soldiers are deployed, sent home, or transferred. For this reason, it is a fluid congregation in a city of often temporary residents. Because they come and go on a regular basis, there are multiple opportunities to engage people with the Good News of Jesus, both inside and outside the walls of St. John. We work the harvest fields while the Lord gives us the opportunity, even if our window of time with any given person or family is short.

I've learned, too, that the message of the Gospel, which I so eagerly desire to study, learn, and preach, is the same Gospel that congregations eagerly desire to hear. The Good News that Jesus saves sinners is the source and strength of all the Church's members, even novice vicars. Even before I set foot in St. John, I already had something in common with the good people here.

Moreover, vicarage is no solo act. It is rather more like an apprenticeship. My supervisor, Rev. Richard Mayer, has been the pastor here at St. John for 24 years, and he is the quintessential example of a faithful pastor. He also has great interpersonal skills and the ability to make anyone feel welcome and at home. This is obvious whenever we walk into a fast-food restaurant (an activity we do a lot). Someone invariably approaches us with a smile and a handshake, someone to whom Pastor Mayer has ministered over the course of his or her life just by being a dutiful servant of the Lord. Watching Pastor Mayer day in and day out makes it evident that warmth and a generous spirit are useful tools when we are called on to approach a soul with the Gospel—whether we are a pastor, another churchworker, or a layperson.

I have realized, too, that the Holy Spirit stretches our comfort zones. It may be as simple as leading the youth activity in which we distributed batteries for fire alarms door-to-door in Lawton neighborhoods, sharing a little about our Christian faith in the process. As you might imagine, the responses were all over the map. I was taken aback by the courage and the eloquence of our youth group. Our Lord can use any of His servants for His mission, whether young or old, including vicars.

What have I learned about myself and my calling during my vicarage year? One of the many good things about being a Lutheran is our rich heritage. It supplies us with innumerable tools to help us learn, grow in, and share the faith we confess. The solid, Christ-centered Confessions, the Catechism, and works of numerous reformers as well as the fathers of our own Synod give us a foundation that is firmly rooted in Holy Scripture and filled with the sound resources needed to tackle any contemporary issue.

Personally, I could not survive a day in the office without these tools, and I am convinced these reference points are indispensable for any Christian, clergy or laity. We are well-equipped with God's Word as it speaks through the Church throughout all the ages, including our own.

No, vicars are not pastors yet, but the vicarage year is a

great and valuable time for the formation of a pastor. Vicars serve as they learn, and in doing so, they learn how to serve.

When the Lord gives, He does so abundantly. My vicarage experience here at St. John has surpassed all my expectations. I am thrilled to return to Concordia, Fort Wayne, finish my final year of preparation, and return to serving my Lord, God willing, as a pastor.

**Andrew Yeager will return to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, this fall for his final year of study in preparation for becoming a pastor in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. His home congregation is Nazareth Lutheran Church, Baltimore, Md.**



## Heeding the Call Challenges, Yes, but Abundant Grace, Too

Many people who consider the pastoral ministry and the four years of study that precede ordination see the road as daunting and filled with challenges. We have

personal doubts about our unworthiness to serve in such a high calling, and we don't see a way through it. I don't know a pastor or vicar who hasn't given thought to his own unworthiness. But we bring to God our unworthiness and our emptiness, and He fills us with the Gospel.

It is true that no one deserves or is worthy to be called a pastor. It's only through the grace and mercy won for you by your Lord and Savior, and the forgiveness He offers you daily, that you can face the long road ahead. A vicar is never alone; rather, he is dependent entirely upon God, and God gives him the proper motivation to serve under Him.

If anyone is considering the ordination track, here are a few questions that might aid your consideration:

- Are you an active participant in the study of God's Word in your local congregation?
- Do you serve others with God's Word, say, as an elder or a deacon?
- Has your pastor or some other churchworker recognized your determination and zeal for the Holy Scriptures?

Don't overthink your likes or dislikes, your preferences or your personality. Pastors come from various backgrounds, have diverse talents, enjoy different things, have different dislikes, and span the personality chart. What matters is God's call through the Church, that is, what God does with us and says to us—that's what counts. Pastors are God's vessels to preach and teach what God says by "rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

If you are considering the holy ministry, I want you to know the joys and blessings of the journey are well worth the years of preparation. Right now, the future might seem opaque, but be encouraged! The Lord in His divine providence works all things for good, and your future is in His hands. —A.Y.



## Specific Ministry Pastor: To Meet a Special Need

**S**pecific Ministry Pastor (SMP) is the newest LCMS program for preparing pastors to fill an identified need in a congregation, cultural setting, or other ministry. SMP uses distance education, local pastors as mentors, and an annual week of study on a seminary campus.

Last fall the two LCMS seminaries enrolled their first students in the program, which involves close collaboration between congregations, districts, and the seminaries. Beginning with an identified need, a congregation, a circuit, or a district may invite a man with the scriptural qualifications to apply for the SMP program. The district examines the application and submits a completed application package to the seminaries.

Before being admitted, a man must demonstrate basic competencies in the Old and New Testaments, Lutheran doctrine, worship, preaching, teaching, and Christian witness. These competencies can be acquired through lay training offered by districts, our

Concordia universities, and our seminaries.

Once admitted, an SMP student serves as a vicar during his first two years in the program. He takes instruction (mostly by Internet) and meets with an assigned pastor-mentor. After completing eight seminary courses during that period, he will be eligible for ordination and a call to his vicarage site. During the next two years, he completes eight more courses while continuing under the supervision of a mentor-pastor. Even after completing the program, he continues under the supervision of a general pastor.

Earlier this year, both seminaries received preliminary approval from the Association of Theological Schools for a comprehensive distance-education program and may now offer courses for academic credit. This enables SMP students to receive credit for their work if they choose to continue study toward a master of divinity degree.

For more information, see our seminary Web sites: [www.csl.edu](http://www.csl.edu) or [ctsfw.edu](http://ctsfw.edu).



*'My ministry is to help revitalize a congregation whose numbers have dwindled over the years and to motivate them to grow both spiritually and in membership.'*

—Clarence Riley

Mount Calvary Lutheran Church near their home in Warner Robins. "I went through a metamorphosis. I got to know the people, the genuineness, the love, and the caring," he says. Realizing that Christian faith was more than a Sunday activity, he became an evangelism caller, an elder, and a hospital chaplain.

Discovering his gift for evangelism, he also sensed God was calling him to be a pastor. For six months, he didn't even tell his wife, Carrie. "I wanted to be sure this was God calling me and not me trying to make that decision," he explains. Finally, he told his pastor, and within 24 hours, three people suggested he become a pastor—which, he says, helped confirm his sense of calling.

### Clarence Riley: Taking Another Plunge

As a young Navy hospital corpsman, Clarence Riley jumped from helicopters to rescue people at sea. At 54, he's taking another plunge—into the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

"I figured that having earned a Ph.D., I was through. I rather enjoyed not being a student," says Riley, an assistant professor of health and physical education at Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, Ga.

Another confession: Twelve years ago, he basically attended church on Sunday—until his family joined

At left: Vicar Clarence Riley teaches a Bible class as he helps to revitalize a congregation in Macon, Ga.

Right: Residents of a refugee camp in the Agjabadi Region of Azerbaijan delight as Rennie Kaufmann shares a message of friendship during a cultural tour sponsored by the U.S. State Department.

Riley started with biweekly trips to Atlanta to complete 10 courses that were preliminary to entering our Synod's Distance Education Leading to Ordination program (DELTO, now being phased out). With the advent of SMP, Mount Calvary fully supported Riley and sponsored his application.

As a vicar, with Rev. David Brighton as his mentor-supervisor, Riley preaches and teaches at Mount Calvary and Lutheran Church of the Holy Trinity in Macon. "My ministry is to help revitalize a congregation whose numbers have dwindled over the years and to motivate them to grow both spiritually and in membership," he says.

Riley is enthusiastic about SMP: "I think this is a tremendous opportunity to match the needs of congregations with the gifts of people who have been selected by God to fill those needs."

Discipline is required, he says, to work 40 to 50 hours at the university, spend 15 to 20 hours on SMP courses, five to 10 hours on vicarage, and still find time with family. He and Carrie have two teenage sons at home, and he also has four adult children.

Riley says he feels "a tremendous sense of community" with his fellow students. "I can truthfully say the professors in the SMP program are shining examples of what educators are all about," Riley says. "None of the SMP guys are slackers either."



## Rennie Kaufmann: Answering the 'Tugs' to Pastoral Ministry

"The office has been pursuing you."

Rennie Kaufmann recalls those words from his pastor, Rev. Randy Duncan, when they talked about the new SMP program. Comparing himself to Jonah, Kaufmann, 48, says he's felt



'It has helped me clarify my ministry calling, and I have gained new friends for life in the teachers and students.'

—Rennie Kaufmann

the "tug" to pastoral ministry since his 20s. Twice, he enrolled in seminary programs, but circumstances kept him from continuing his studies.

"I am blown away by the servant hearts I have witnessed in those implementing and teaching this new program," says the now-seminarian in the SMP program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. "The seminary staff is extremely accommodating and show their care and servant hearts by consistently being available. They are open to suggestions for making this program better."

The son of a U.S. Army officer, Kaufmann spent his high school years in Iran (before the revolution), walking or hitch-hiking to find a Bible study, youth group, or worship service. During 18 years traveling the world as an "Army brat" with parents who loved history and archeology, he lived in Thailand, backpacked in Egypt (at 16), went on digs in Iran, and visited Israel.

Kaufmann's home was always filled with music, and that became his secular career. "I grew up singing and playing. I played piano at officers clubs and eventually did private and corporate events," he says. "In addition, I was always in worship arts—music and drama."

In the past year-and-a-half, Kaufmann was hired twice by the U.S. State Department as a cultural envoy to Azerbaijan, bringing music, magic tricks—he calls them "Gospel illusions"—and stories to refugee camps, orphanages, entertainment centers, and embassies. "I also had a chance to minister to the very active 'underground church' there," he adds.

Today, he is an SMP vicar, elder, and pastoral assistant to Duncan at Living Word Lutheran Church in Plymouth, Mich. He preaches occasionally and conducts visitation, local and cross-cultural evangelism, and helps with the music ministry. He and his wife, Karen, also lead junior-high ministry. (He and Karen have five children, ranging in age from 22 to 13.)

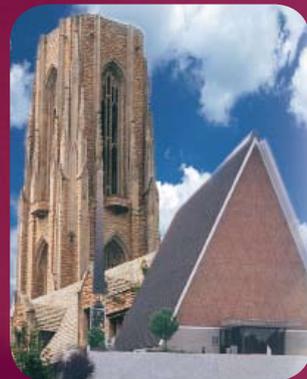
"The knowledge I am gaining is immediately useful in the context of my life and ministry," Kaufmann says. "It has helped me clarify my ministry calling, and I have gained new friends for life in the teachers and students. I feel part of a team of teachers and students who are united in storming the gates of hell together."

**Roland Lovstad is an editor-at-large for *The Lutheran Witness* and a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Perryville, Mo.**

# Engaging the World with the Gospel

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## Technology: A Dynamic Tool for Forming Pastors on—and beyond— the Campus



Photos by Lois Engfehr, Concordia Seminary

As technology enables LCMS seminaries to broaden their reach through new and innovative ways to teach and learn, they are also giving careful attention to assure that technical advances also foster the goal of not just training, but forming, pastors for the mission of engaging the world with the Gospel of hope.

“It’s no longer about not using technology or the expense of technology,” observes Rev. Anthony Cook, director of education and technology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. “It’s simply about using technology in a creative way to advance the Gospel.”

Cook points out that today’s students—whether in the residence program on campus or in a “distance learning” program—rely on their computer and the Internet. Instead of poring over a book in the library, they may be using their computers to access the card catalog, find a theological journal article, or conduct other research. They may be viewing or reviewing a class lecture, discussing a Scripture text online with fellow students and professors, or turning in an assignment.

### Developing New Ways of Teaching

Professors also are developing new teaching methods to incorporate technology. For example, Cook, an assistant professor of practical theology, uses a collaborative Web site for his on-campus class on Lutheran confirmation. Each student writes one lesson and posts it on the site, where other students review and edit the content. “By the time we are done, they will have a full confirmation program they can use when they go to their first call,” Cook says.

“In some situations, we are moving from a professor lecturing to a professor asking questions. Then students attack the questions and do the research under the professor’s guidance,” observes Rev. William Johnson, educational technology specialist at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. “Through their interactions they teach one another.”

“We’re finding new ways to share the same doctrines and communicate effectively in ways that traditional models didn’t necessarily do,” explains Johnson. He sees technology helping the Fort Wayne seminary further its new curriculum, which emphasizes interaction between faculty and students. “It’s a relational model; it’s not necessarily ‘Herr Professor’ any longer, but a professor who guides the students in the classroom and serves as a model of pastoral care for them.”

**Above:** Technology supports education on campus and off, and extends the reach of Kebede Yigezu, a graduate student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

**Below:** Rev. Anthony Cook (seated), director of educational technology and Dr. David Wollenburg, director of distance education, review an online course. Both teach in the Practical Theology Department of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

## Using Distance Education

The church's pressing need for pastors is spurring the use of technology for "distance education." The process seeks to form pastors for rural and inner-city congregations and immigrant populations—locations unable to support a full-time pastor. Often, the locations are served under district supervision by a layman who has completed basic instruction in the Scriptures, Christian doctrine, and preaching and enters a program with a seminary. Active congregations also tap distance education to equip a staff member or a layman for ministries such as outreach to ethnic groups or church planting.

Dr. Douglas Rutt, dean for distance learning at Concordia, Fort Wayne, recalls his weekly routine 15 years ago in Latin America. He traveled around the country, leading three-hour evening classes at one location, then moving on to another—and the next.

"Technology makes it much richer," he says. "Certainly, distances don't have to be an obstacle." He says technology also offers "dynamic tools" to connect students in all four corners of the United States into a virtual community.

The most efficient way to form pastors is for them to come to the seminary campus, says Dr. David Wollenburg, director of distance education at Concordia, St. Louis. "But," he adds, "that would leave ministries without any pastoral care. In those instances the new distance-education opportunities for pastor formation may be appropriate.

"The seminary formation process in distance education is based upon the needs of the church, not an individual's desire to be a pastor," Wollenburg observes. Referring to the new Specific Ministry Pastor program (see the story in this issue), he adds, "The expectation is that these men will serve in the ministry where they are until they gain additional credentialing."

A vital concern for both Rutt and Wollenburg is the development of community among professors and students so that technology helps to do more than teach, but helps form pastors.

**At Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Dr. Douglas Rutt (left) and Rev. William Johnson discuss methods of delivering instruction to students in the Specific Ministry Pastor (SMP) program. Rutt is dean of distance learning and associate professor of pastoral ministry and missions; Johnson is a theological-education specialist.**



## Building Community

"You have to think differently," Wollenburg says. "It could very easily happen that students feel separated from the faculty member." In addition to traditional interactions through graded weekly journals and web-based discussions, professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, encourage contact by offering weekly two-hour live sessions. "It's a live meeting," he adds, "Every student has to be equipped with speakers and a webcam."

At Fort Wayne, the faculty use online "discussion boards" and e-mail. Rutt notes that instructors employ learning strategies such as readings and assignments that involve students in small groups who work together virtually, using the Internet tools that are available to establish a sense of community.

"Learning takes place in a social context and therefore the interaction among the students is the key to it all," Rutt observes. "It's not so much in the use of fancy technology to deliver a piece of content, but it's more in making it possible for students to interact—between themselves and with the professor."

From experience with the Distance Education Leading to Ordination program, Wollenburg says the seminary has learned that distance-education students do build relationships. "They do get to know each other online. They pray for one another and with one another online, and they share their joys and sorrows." He adds that distance students also build close relationships to their local assigned pastor-mentor and the congregation in which they serve.

"Just because it's distance, it doesn't mean it comes easy," Wollenburg says of the process. "Many students have a family, a job, and a vicarage or parish assignment while they are going to school, and these courses require at least as much personal time as do the residential courses."

## Reaching Beyond

For almost two years Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has placed courses—in video and audio formats—on iTunes U, a branch of the popular Web site for music downloads. The seminary gets thousands of downloads every week, according to Cook. "People are beginning to use them in different ways, like Bible class or pastors brushing up on their studies," he says. The offerings include a full course of Greek.

"I would love to have a computer in every congregation's library, where a member can sit down and easily access content that is delivered to them from the seminary via the Internet," he adds.

Johnson speaks about initiatives to make faculty and their expertise available to the whole church. "This is a time of ubiquitous information and ubiquitous disinformation," he says. "It behooves us to provide a bastion of good solid teaching and authority that is available to God's people at any place. It could be a marvelous time for the Gospel."

**Roland Lovstad is an editor-at-large for *The Lutheran Witness* and a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Perryville, Mo.**



*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. STEVEN C. WARD was removed from the Ordained Minister of Religion roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, effective Jan. 26 and is, therefore, no longer eligible for a call. REV. WILLIAM RUSNAK resigned from the Ordained Minister of Religion roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, no longer eligible for a call. DOUGLAS WELCH was removed from the Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, no longer eligible to receive a call. MARY BROCKMAN, LAURA DAUGHERTY, DANNY MAGNUS, JAMES M. MILLER, and HOLLY OBERKROM have resigned from the Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, no longer eligible to receive a call.—Rev. Ray G. Mirly, President, LCMS Missouri District.

REV. JOHN GREIN, Swanville, Minn., was appointed circuit counselor for the Long Prairie Circuit, replacing REV. STEVEN HAYDEN, who accepted a call to another district.—Dr. Donald J. Fondow, President, LCMS Minnesota North District.

REV. GREGORY P. HOLLIS, Hilton Head Island, S.C., resigned from the Ministers of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He is, therefore, no longer eligible to consider a call.—Dr. Jon T. Diefenthaler, President, LCMS Southeastern District.

## Official Notices— Colloquies

DAVID J. RUSSERT, Montvale, N.J.; RONALD E. RIEMER, Coloma, Wis.; JOHN E. PRIEST, Delhi, N.Y.; JIMMY A. LALLJIE, Queens Village, N.Y.; CARL L. BECKWITH, Fultondale, Ala.; PAUL N. ROSCHKE, Bryan, Texas; ROBIN J. DUGALL, Engel, Idaho; JOHN M. FRAISER, Louisville, Ky.; AUGUST K. RISTOW JR., Tucson, Ariz.; LUKE W. KASTNER, Palm Springs, Calif.; DONAVON L. RILEY, Woodbury, Minn.; WALTER BREINER JR., Summit Hill, Pa.; GEMECHU OLANA, Long Beach, Calif.; BERHANU SEYOUM, Lynwood, Wash.; have completed all requirements for the Pastoral Colloquy Program through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

TERRY HELD, Centerton, Ariz., has submitted his application for the Pastoral Colloquy Program through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. DOUGLAS SELETZKY, Berea, Ohio; has submitted his application for the Pastoral Colloquy Program through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. CONNIE S. BICKEL, Webster Groves, Mo.; LAURIE DUNNETTE, Maryville, Ill.; TREVOR PARKS, Saginaw, Mich.; JEANNE M. HOWKE, Kalispell, Mont.; VALERIE K. MUNOZ, San Diego, Calif.; ADAM KLUTH, Round Rock, Texas; and DELORES C. FURREY, Gilbert, Ariz., have submitted their applications for the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through CUEnet. ANDREW C. SIELAFF, Phoenix, Ariz., has submitted his application for the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through Concordia University,

Irvine, Calif. VALORIE NELSON, Flushing, Mich., has submitted her application for the Director of Christian Outreach Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn. Correspondence regarding their applications should be directed within four weeks after publication of this notice to Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

BRADLEY FEENSTRA, Spring Lake, Mich.; HEATHER CHRISTENSEN, Sylvania, Ohio; MYCHAL THOM, Rochester Hills, Mich.; and MARY LYNN BUCK, Flint, Mich., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—

Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Kevin Brandon, Dean, School of Education, Concordia University, Ann Arbor, 4090 Geddes Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2797.

CHRISTINA O’NEILL, Las Vegas, Nev., 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.

LA VONNE DOLLIVER, Dallas, Texas, and CHRISTOPHER FRITSSCHE, Giddings, Texas, have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy

## Spiritual Support for Living Today

As a husband and father of three, I have been struggling to make ends meet, due to the general state of the economy. My income has remained steady, but the increase in my monthly bills, along with college on the horizon, has meant cutbacks in other areas—not the least of which is my church offering. I don't want a lecture about tithing. Rather, I'm looking for some spiritual support and guidance for living in these economically stressful times.

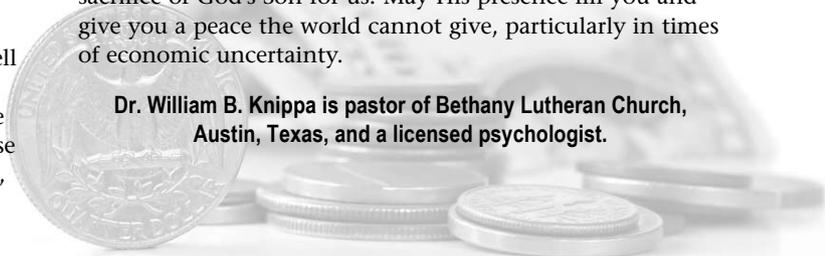
It is often in challenging times that God gives us the opportunity to experience the security and peace that is ours in Christ. The apostle Paul says this: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6 ESV). Paul calls us to bring our burdens to Christ "with thanksgiving" for what we have, rather than focusing on what we don't have. Recall as well Jesus' words in Matthew 6: "Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' . . . your heavenly Father knows you need [all these things]. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,

and all these things will be given you as well." Our Lord Jesus is fully aware of the financial pressures we face, even as He is intimately familiar with all the struggles of our humanness. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we live our faith as best we can. This includes our efforts to manage our money in a faithfully responsible manner.

On a practical level, there are resources that teach money management from a Christian perspective. Many have found these to be helpful in matters related to budgeting, handling debt, charitable giving, and establishing Christ-honoring attitudes toward money and other material possessions. In addition, there are credit-counseling services available in many cities to assist individuals and families living with debt that is debilitating.

Underlying all is the security we have through the sacrifice of God's Son for us. May His presence fill you and give you a peace the world cannot give, particularly in times of economic uncertainty.

**Dr. William B. Knippa is pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas, and a licensed psychologist.**



## NOTICES

Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Jim McConnell, Assistant Colloquy Program Director, Concordia University Texas, 11400 Concordia University Drive, Austin, TX 78726.

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

### Official Notices— Requests for Reinstatement

DANIEL JURKOVIC, Toronto, Ontario, and CHARLES MC CLEAN, Alexandria, Va., have applied for reinstatement to the Minister of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. CAROLYN RUSNAK, St. Louis, Mo., has applied for reinstatement to the Minister of Religion—Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Correspondence regarding these applications should be directed to the undersigned for receipt no later than June 5.—Dr. Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

### 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. Because the June and July issues are combined, the deadline is June 20 for the August issue and July 20 for the September issue. Send notices to karen.higgins@lcms.org.—Ed.

The **Commission on Theology and Church Relations** (CTCR) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod seeks nominations for the position of **assistant executive director**. This person provides assistance to the executive director and associate executive director in carrying out the responsibilities assigned to the CTCR in accordance with the Synod's objectives and policies set forth in the LCMS Constitution and bylaws, policies of the Board of Directors, resolutions of Synod conventions, and policies of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.

**Responsibilities:** Following the guidance and leadership of the senior management of the CTCR, this person:

- Functions as an effective resource person for providing leadership and guidance in the areas of theology and church relations.
- Provides assistance to the President of the Synod, as requested.
- Serves as the primary resource person for providing information in the area of religious organizations and movements.
- Executes research projects and prepares resource materials for inclusion on the CTCR Web site.
- Assists in the editing of CTCR documents before publication.
- Responds to correspondence to the Commission requesting information and

guidance in matters of theology and church relations and to e-mails forwarded by the LCMS Church Information Center.

- Reports on the work of the Commission and presents results to various groups upon request.
- Manages and coordinates the work of and provides theological expertise for task forces and committees as assigned.
- Monitors ecclesiastical and social developments in assigned areas.
- Assists in the planning of theological conferences and workshops sponsored by the Commission.
- Maintains the Commission's library and archives.

#### Qualifications:

- An active member of an LCMS congregation.
- Faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and supportive of the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws and policies.
- Well trained and competent in theology (advanced degree in theology desirable), and demonstrated ability to deal evangelically with sensitive situations.
- Potential for developing administrative skills, including the ability to carry on and supervise theological research.
- Ability to communicate well, both orally and in writing.
- Minimum of five years of experience in congregational service is desired.
- Experience in church relations (such as serving on intersynodical and ecumenical committees) is desired.

## It's All in the Name

My 3-year-old daughter, Analiesa, discovered last night that God has the same name we do.

I was once again teaching her the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven," I began.

We got to "hallowed be Thy name," and Analiesa stopped me.

"That's our name," she stated.

I looked at her, wondering what she was talking about. She repeated: "Hollowood be Thy name."

I couldn't help but laugh. I told her it was pronounced "hallowed" and enunciated it very slowly. I even explained what hallowed meant.

"No," she said. "It's Hollowood! He's our Father."

I couldn't argue with that. Not when I was smiling so broadly. Besides, it can wait until she's a little older.

**Darla Hollowood**

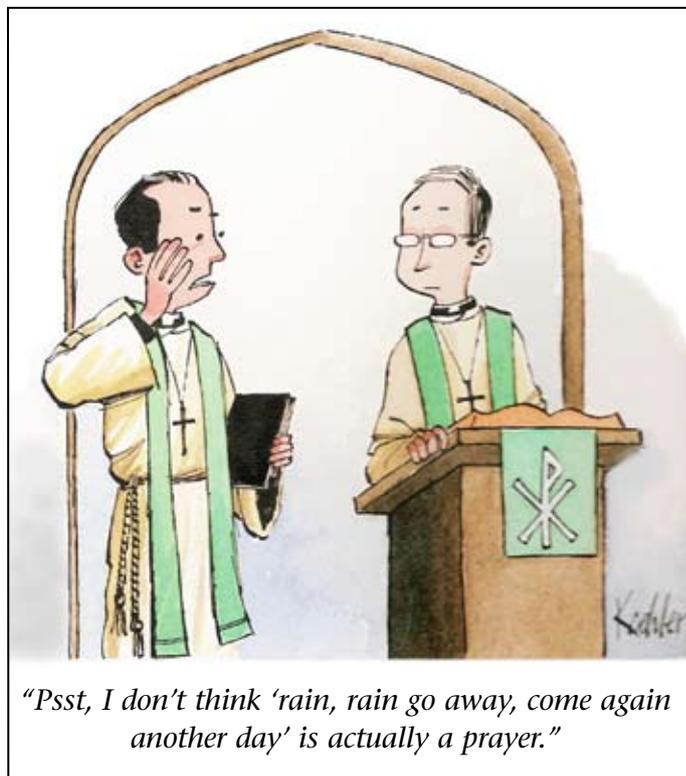
**Chapel of the Cross Lutheran Church  
St. Peters, Mo.**

## A Practical Definition

"Social tact": Making your company feel at home even though you wish they were.

**George Kottwitz**

**Trinity Lutheran Church  
Edwardsville, Ill.**



Nominations should be submitted by May 20 to David Fiedler, Interim Director of Human Resources, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122; e-mail: [david.fiedler@lcms.org](mailto:david.fiedler@lcms.org); fax: 314-996-1121.

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

**Concordia University, Irvine, Calif.**, seeks to fill the following faculty position: **Campus Pastor.**

**Concordia University, Portland, Ore.**, seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **Social Work, Clinical Nursing, Director of International Student Recruiting, Elementary Education.**

**Concordia University Texas, Austin, Texas**, seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **Communications, Nursing, Center Director.**

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. Because the June and July issues are combined, the deadline is June 20 for the August issue and July 20 for the September issue. Send notices to [karen.higgins@lcms.org](mailto:karen.higgins@lcms.org).—Ed.*

**Unity, Cleveland, Ohio**, will celebrate its 95th anniversary at the 9:30 a.m. worship service on May 3; Rev. Peeter Pirm will preside. Special displays related to Unity's history will be available after the service. Dinner also will be served. Call 216-741-2085 for reservations. For more information, visit [www.unity-lutheran.org](http://www.unity-lutheran.org).

**Prince of Peace, Lakewood, Wash.**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary throughout the year, beginning with a special service and lunch on May 17. Photos and remembrances may be submitted. Contact the church office at 253-584-2565 or visit [www.poplakewood.org](http://www.poplakewood.org).

**Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church of Glendora, Buchanan, Mich.**, will continue to celebrate its 90th anniversary. Under the leadership of Rev. Thomas R. Brazinsky, four more Celebration Sundays are scheduled for May 17, June 28, Sept. 13, and Oct. 11.

**St. Mark, Steubenville, Ohio**, will celebrate its 85th anniversary with a special worship service at 4 p.m., May 24, followed by an anniversary banquet. Contact the church office at 740-264-2561.

**St. Paul's, Enid, Okla.**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary at the 8, 9:15, and 10:30 a.m. worship services on May 24. Dr. Ken Klaus, Lutheran Hour speaker, will be the speaker. A catered banquet at the Cherokee Strip Conference Center will follow the 10:30 a.m. service. Contact the church office at [splchurch@sbcglobal.net](mailto:splchurch@sbcglobal.net).

**Our Redeemer, Jackson, Minn.**, will celebrate its 60th anniversary at the 9 a.m. worship service, June 7, with Pastor Paul Croluis preaching. Fellowship and a meal will follow. Contact the church office at 507-847-3693.

**Trinity, Ardmore, Okla.**, will celebrate its 75th anniversary with special services and meals on June 13–14. Guest speaker will be Rev. John Wackler, former member and now pastor of St. Paul, Texhoma, Okla. Contact the church office at 580-223-3048 or e-mail [tlutheran@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tlutheran@sbcglobal.net).

**Immanuel, rural Lidgerwood, N.D.**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary at the 7 p.m. worship service on June 13 and at the 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. worship services on June 14. Former pastors will preach at each of the services. A catered meal will be served following the 10 a.m. Sunday service.

**Zion and St. John, rural Wisner, Neb.**, will celebrate 40 years as a combined congregation with a 10:30 a.m. celebration service on June 14, with a noon dinner and confirmation reunion to follow. RSVP to [bjbeune@gpcom.net](mailto:bjbeune@gpcom.net) or [dotdon2@gpcom.net](mailto:dotdon2@gpcom.net).

**Trinity, Hanceville, Ala.**, will continue its 125th anniversary throughout the year. Each month, former pastors and other LCMS representatives are scheduled to visit, including Revs. Steve Sanderson, David Rubke, Chris Powell, Fred Reinhardt, Bob Roegner, Jim Holowach, David McMinn, and Southern District President Kurtis Schultz.



# Gone, but Not Forgotten

**H**ave you ever felt the pain of being separated from a loved one? Nearly everyone has. Whether we are separated by time, distance, or death, we know how it feels to be apart from someone we love. In most cases, our separation is tempered by the realization that, one day, we will be reunited with our loved one. Our loved ones may be far away, but modern technology and transportation keeps them close at hand: Usually they are just a phone call, e-mail, or trip away.

When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He was gone, but not forgotten. It doesn't seem so long ago that most churches celebrated the Ascension of our Lord with a worship service. Although some congregations still continue the practice, Ascension Day—May 21 this year—has been relegated to an afterthought between Easter and Pentecost. What is the meaning of Ascension Day, and why should we still observe it? Let's read the following verses from Holy Scripture and find out!



Read Luke's account of the Ascension in Acts 1:1–11. What does Jesus instruct the disciples to do in His absence? (See also Matt. 28:19–20.)

Whom does Jesus promise to send in His place?

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In what manner will Jesus return?

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Read Luke 24:44–53. How do the disciples respond to Jesus' ascension?

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Although Jesus has ascended bodily into heaven, being God, He is also present among us now and eternally. What does Jesus promise to those who come together in His name (Matt. 18:20)?

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How is Jesus present in the celebration of His Holy Supper (Matt. 26:26–29; 1 Cor. 11:23–26)?

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Now that Jesus has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father in power and glory, what does He do for us (1 John 2:1)?

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How does our ascended Lord equip the saints for ministry in His Church (Eph. 4:7–13)?

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Read Phil. 2:1–11. Now that our Savior has taken His rightful place in heaven as Ruler and Sovereign, what comfort does this give to the faithful?

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Ever since our Lord has ascended into heaven, He is gone but not forgotten. Although He bodily rules in heaven, Jesus (being God) is present everywhere. He is present wherever people gather to worship and pray in His name. He is present in the elements of bread and wine in His Holy Supper. He promises to return in power and glory at the end of time. Jesus is gone, but He is not forgotten. He is as close to us as His Word. His Spirit reaches out to us in Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. One day, He will come for us, and we will be with Him. Until then, keep your gaze heavenward!

Rev. Ben Eder is pastor of Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Kenmore, N.Y.

