

# THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

VOL. 127 NO. 9 SEPTEMBER 2008

Katrina Revisited:

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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.

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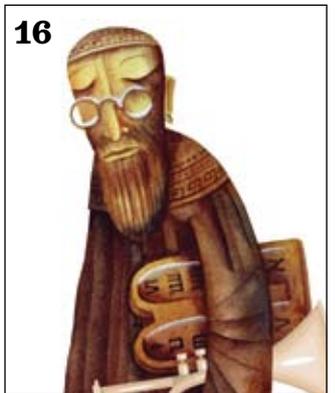
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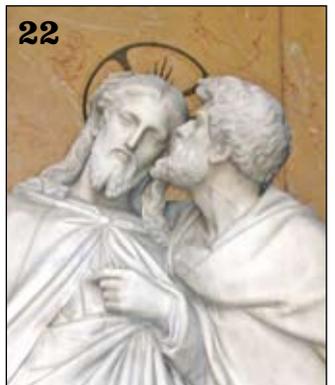
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## TO THE READER

As you can see from this contents page, we're bursting at the seams this month—with stories about Katrina, the flooding this summer in the Midwest, and Mission Central, to name just a few. We're even short of space here. We hope you enjoy this issue and because of it take time to thank our gracious Father for all the blessings He has bestowed on us, especially our faithful volunteer workers.

J.H.H.



Author Susan Senechal with Gerald, a Kenyan colleague.

## Dancing with Joy

Stepping off the plane at the start of our African mission trip, I had visions of taking a side excursion, a genuine safari. After all, we had a free day to get acclimated, and my friend, who had taken this trip six months earlier, had used her free day to go on a safari. But disappointment was my lot. I was told our group wouldn't be going to the nearby reserve this time. Somehow, I felt cheated out of part of my experience. "Who goes to Kenya without going on safari?" I wondered.

In our worship service that night, I learned that the Swahili word *safari* actually means "journey," not "animal hunt" as I had always supposed. That night, unable to sleep, I felt as though God spoke gently into my heart. "Susan," He seemed to say, "this isn't about seeing animals in Africa; this is a safari to see Me, to journey beside Me."

The next morning I arose with renewed enthusiasm for the journey, for God's safari. What an adventure I was about to have!

We arrived at the site where we would set up our eye-care clinic, a church in a rural area about two hours from Nairobi. It was midway through their Sunday-morning worship service. An elder quickly ushered us to the front of the church, and the pastor began his sermon in English, making us feel welcome, while another gentleman translated for the worshipers. When it was time for Communion, I felt a special thrill, knowing that Jesus' body and blood unites believers in Kenya to those half-way around the globe in my home, Houston, Texas, who would celebrate in the same way in a few hours. We truly are one in Christ.

An even bigger thrill awaited me as the offering began and the words of 2 Cor. 9:7 came alive. "Each man

should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (NIV). As the music began (the beat of a drum and a *cappella* voices), the worshipers began to "dance" their offerings to the front of the church. Swaying, spinning, bowing, dancing exuberant joy—these were cheerful givers!

While most placed money in the basket, one family brought forward two live chickens, two others brought bags of produce, and one family gave a stack of five plastic Wal-Mart-style chairs. (These were quickly put to use in our clinic the following week.) While I was wondering if the chickens were going to fly the coop, or in this case, the offering plate, the pastor made a point of saying that each of these families was acknowledging that everything we have is a gift from God.

My mind could not get past the joy of the dance. I have never danced when placing my offering in the plate on Sunday, and what's more, I've never even had that attitude. Yes, I willingly give my tithe, not begrudgingly, but I've never given it with the thrill I saw among these people of such modest means. I have no idea how many coins were placed in the offering basket that day, but I know that what God received was far more valuable than coins—He received heartfelt worship from people who understood that not just what they had was a gift from God, but who they are is God's gift as well—people who know salvation in Jesus Christ.

My safari with God that week was just beginning.

**Susan Senechal is a member of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Kingwood, Texas.**



## Struggling with 'why?'

In "Does Everything Mean Everything?" Rev. Jack Karch shares a dramatic real-life story of God's goodness to him and his family. I thank God for the great outcome. The ending, however, puzzles me.

I am choosing to put the "best construction" on that last paragraph—that Rev. Karch did not intentionally suggest that his boy was saved from death because they loved God and that the other boy died because his parents did not. The question of *why* some get healed and

ally reads in the ESV as quoted in the article, I now am certain that I will never read the ESV.) "For those who love God all things work together for good" is miles away in meaning (and ability to bring comfort) from the NIV, which reads, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." It is not the things that happen to us which work out for good, it is God who works through them for our good. The things have no ability to work out—only God has that ability, and if we are to find comfort in "everything," then the comfort

into the kingdom of God through the waters of Baptism. I find it disappointing the order of importance the ads received in this issue.

Denise Melius  
Chelsea, S.D.

## Signs for these times

In the June/July *Lutheran Witness* article, "How Good Is Good Enough," the sign posted by Shepherd of the Hills in San Antonio, Texas, got my attention. It speaks to the doubts so many have and addresses with clarity why faith in Christ is what is necessary for our eternal salvation.

There is so much misinformation out there, and signs on churches can be a real mission vehicle if they are thought through and aimed at conveying a Gospel message and not just a trite saying that doesn't make people think.

Norma Petzold  
Decatur, Ind.



The question of why some get healed and others do not is a troubling one that in the end needs to be left in the lap of God.

Rev. Todd Brunworth  
Gaylord, Mich.

others do not is a troubling one that in the end needs to be left in the lap of God.

As a parish pastor for more than 30 years, I have experienced journeys similar to Rev. Karch's, both in my family and in my church families. In my initial reading, it seemed that he might be insinuating that the "for good" in Rom. 8:28 means God will answer our prayer the way we want (life, in these two cases). There are many faithful saints who have to struggle through the *why* question because their "for good" included the death of their child.

Rev. Todd Brunworth  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
Gaylord, Mich.

I was very surprised to get to the end of the article "Does Everything Mean Everything?" and find that it had been written by a pastor. (I do not read ESV, and if Rom. 8:28 actu-

ally must come from knowing that it is God who is working for our good. If the author had written anything along those lines then I could say "Yes, everything means everything." As it is, his approach to the subject gave me no encouragement whatsoever. I was disappointed in the article.

Janet Price  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Edgewood, N.M.

## What were you thinking?

I was excited to receive the June/July *Lutheran Witness*. I flipped open the cover only to see four elderly women in bathing suits prancing in ocean water. There is a time and a place for that sort of advertising and a magazine of this caliber is not it. Thankfully, when I turned the next page my eyes landed upon a beautiful vision of a baby being brought

## An excellent witness

I'm finally writing a letter of thanks for the wonderful *Lutheran Witness*. We have been getting it for years. We read other people's responses, so it's good we are finally responding.

I saved a 20-year-old *Witness*—not quite so fancy paper in those days. I gave it to our former young pastor, and he was so happy to keep it for his files. It was about the ascension of Jesus.

Dr. Paul L. Maier's articles are very interesting, and the June/July story, "Luther's Journey with Paul," was so very good.

The Lifeline stories—November 2007, "Let God Love You" (I'm 79; my husband, 82)—was so nice that I shared it with my sisters and friends. [We also appreciated] the January 2007 Lifeline story, "Sought"—"You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16).

I could go on—what an excellent witness *The Lutheran Witness* is. Thanks to all the hardworking people there.

Oh, the jokes are good too: "A merry heart does good like medicine" (Prov. 17:22).

About seven years ago, you had an article about the Athanasian Creed. I gave it away and later was sorry. People ask me about the creed. If possible, could you send me a copy, but if it's too difficult, I understand.

*Caroline and Vic Norderud  
Lombard, Ill.*

**Editor's note: The story of which Mr. and Mrs. Norderud speak, "I, Athanasius" by Rev. Gordon A. Beck, appeared in the June 1998 issue of *The Lutheran Witness*. We were able to provide the Norderuds with a copy of the story, and we have also posted it on our Web site, [lcms.org/witness](http://lcms.org/witness). Click on "Departments" and then "Classic Witness."**

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.



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Cover photo by Nicole Bradshaw

# Katrina Revisited: God Sent



Three years after back-to-back Hurricanes Katrina and Rita destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes and changed forever the lives of a million Gulf Coast families, Lutheran volunteers are making a difference, rebuilding one house—and *life*—at a time.

But there's still lots more to do and workers are still needed to lend a hand.

Sande G., a 50-something homeowner in East New Orleans, says the mold in her twice-flooded living room was so extensive, "if it was a science project, we would've gotten an A-plus."

The water climbed to 8 feet, 9 inches outside—and 27 inches inside—Sande's elevated house as a result of citywide flooding from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in late-August and mid-September 2005.

She and her husband, Don, who had evacuated days before Katrina made landfall, couldn't get past National Guardsmen to return to their home for a month afterward. And local red tape prevented them from getting a building permit for a full year.

But now, three years after the storms, those once-moldy walls have been replaced and painted a striking blue-gray. The floors gleam with "Monterey maple" hardwood. There are rebuilt front and back porches. New doors and windows.

It's not finished, but it's getting there, Sande says, thanks to Lutherans and others across the country who have sacrificed their own time and money to travel to New Orleans to help people they've never met.

"I've been totally elated by total strangers," says Sande, who's received about 100 notes, cards, and e-mails from dozens of Lutherans who've helped rehab her house.

She's been through a lot: the loss of her home of 20 years; a robbery at gunpoint in the on-site trailer where she now lives; the untimely death of her husband, Don, of a heart attack just last fall.

"We had pretty much lost hope," she says of the months following what she calls "the storm." (She still can't bear to say the word *Katrina*.)

And then, the Christians came: to pray with her and help her rebuild—her house *and* her life.

# Angels



From left to right: Brenda Johnson, the head cook at Camp Restore, leaves the mobile kitchen donated by Orphan Grain Train. "I love every volunteer that comes here," says Johnson.

Sande G. (center, wearing glasses) takes part in a photo shoot with LCMS volunteers who worked on her house.

Southern District President Kurtis Schultz, center (in red), talks with Camp Restore staff members in the camp's project room. The white board in the background lists some two dozen "active cases" that are in various stages of renovation in New Orleans.

"All of a sudden, we were praying again," said Sande, a Presbyterian who had drifted away from the church. "It was like we had our faith back. It was like, we didn't feel God's presence, and then—because of the people we met—we knew He'd been here all along."

## A District Responds

Sande's words don't surprise Rev. Kurtis Schultz, president of the Synod's Southern District, whose own home in Slidell, La., was flooded and who for five months was displaced from the New Orleans-based district office by the storms' one-two punch.

Even though Schultz is back in his refurbished house, he still finds it "difficult to breathe" when he sees photos of the Gulf Coast devastation. He knows that those who've had their lives turned upside-down, like him, are "very, very receptive" to the prayers and care of Christians.

Talk to the people in the streets, talk to local government officials, Schultz says, and "they'll tell you: If it was not for the church, there would be no recovery."

But, he's quick to add, that recovery is "continuing" and is far from over.

After three years, the two hospitals in the city's east side still haven't reopened. Take a drive through the neighborhood and you can still make out fading floodwater lines six feet high on walls and windows. Rehabbed buildings in various stages of repair sit alongside those with the spray-painted

red X's of disaster inspectors. There are still lots of "For Sale" signs, boarded-up windows, and piles of debris at the curb.

Residents who fled are starting to move back, but, in some hard-hit areas, fewer than half have done so.

"We know the work could continue for another seven years," Schultz says.

With its offices now relocated in Mandeville, La., the Southern District has built an extensive disaster-response network called Recovery Assistance Inc., or RAI, that works to provide hope to hurting people under the motto "Restoring Faith, Home, and Community."

RAI manages two properties that house out-of-town volunteers—Camp Restore in New Orleans, and Camp Biloxi in Biloxi, Miss.—and includes LINC New Orleans, which works with local leaders to strengthen communities; Restoration Education and Evangelism (Re)Institute, which offers regional training to help Christians reach out with their faith during disasters; and a ministry-restoration arm that supports church workers, congregations, and schools.

Since the storms, the district has received more than \$7 million from individuals and groups—including LCMS World Relief and Human Care, Orphan Grain Train, and Thrivent Financial for Lutherans—and has spent about \$5 million to date, mostly to operate the two camps, which have fed, housed, and trained 22,000-plus clean-up volunteers from all 50 states and 30 foreign countries. Many have served more than once, and some have returned up

# God Sent Angels

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to 10 times to help out.

“The servant heart of the Synod is beating strong in this place,” Schultz said recently at Camp Restore, where more than 100 mostly teenage volunteers sat at long tables in the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church gym—now the camp’s cafeteria—soberly watching an orientation slideshow about the disaster before they began their first day of work.

the beginning.”

That sentiment is echoed by Corinna Hollar, communications manager at Camp Biloxi, who says out-of-town Lutherans started showing up to help within days of Hurricane Katrina, sleeping in the pews of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Biloxi, where the camp is now located.

In those early days, she said, the volunteers would accompany her husband, Good Shepherd Pastor Eric Hollar,



## Needs Are ‘Numerous’

Even after three years, the needs of Katrina victims “are demanding and numerous,” according to Pam Hunter, RAI’s resource manager, who takes phone calls all day long—and sometimes after she’s left the office, on her cell—from people who need help.

Hunter estimates that up to 70 percent of those with damages are still replacing lost items, such as washers, dryers, refrigerators, furniture—even mattresses. She has 200 names on her “to help” list, she says, and as a Katrina survivor who was rescued from her roof and lost everything, she knows how helpless they feel. She still has “ups and downs” and suspects she has post-traumatic stress, because “I’m reliving [the disaster] all the time” at work, and, because of the never-ending needs, “I don’t have time to unwind.”

Her own house was rehabbed by volunteers—“God sent angels,” she says—and if it weren’t for them, she figures, “a good 95 percent of the work that’s been done would not have been done.” Even when government aid was lagging and nonexistent, the volunteers, she says, “were here from

in walks around the hard-hit community, asking residents how they could help.

Even today, with both camps stocked with every tool necessary to build a house, as well as dormitories, dining halls, and mobile kitchens, volunteers housed there still go on “prayer walks” through local neighborhoods, asking residents if they have prayer—or other—needs. Almost all of them do.

Says Rev. Ed Brashier, chaplain and director of Camp Restore: “Even though things look better than they did two or three years ago, the desolation of mind and spirit remains.”

Sharing faith is the most important aspect of the recovery work, according to Schultz, who says “the total heart of what we do . . . is turning critical incidents into ‘critical events’”—those one-on-one Gospel-sharing experiences that make up the Synod’s worldwide *Ablaze!* initiative.

Simply put, it’s one person sharing his or her Christian faith—and hope—with another.

Even a garage sale hosted at Camp Restore had a

Lutheran message. As local residents chose tagged items and brought them to the checkout to pay, “We totaled the amount up and said, ‘It’s free. Because that’s what grace is about—it’s free,’” Schultz recalled. “They were very moved.”

“We’re rebuilding houses,” explains Rev. Dave Buss, executive director of RAI, “but our focus is on sharing the hope of Christ.”

## Making a Difference

Judging from New Orleans’ bustling French Quarter, eight miles from Camp Restore, and Biloxi’s busy casinos, a couple of miles from Camp Biloxi, one might think everything’s back to normal on the once-devastated Gulf Coast.

But Lutheran relief workers know better.

“We were one of the first faith-based groups working here, and [we] continue to be here long after many others have left the area or closed,” says John Coyle, director of Camp Biloxi.

resource that she prays can be replicated elsewhere, whether or not there’s a disaster.

“I think God has given us a gift here,” she said of the post-Katrina partnerships.

Those connections make sense to Sande G., who, in spite of her storm-related troubles, treasures her newfound Lutheran friends in Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas—the former strangers who “came down here, wallowing in the mire when they didn’t have to, to sweat with us.”

She laughs when she recalls the teens who came up with a song, “Sandin’ at Sande’s,” and another high-spirited youth group who left silhouettes of themselves on her bathroom wall (which she loves).

“Can you imagine what that house is going to be like to live in, with all the good Christian hearts [built into it]?” she asks.



From left to right:

Drew Bradshaw, left, and Rev. Ralph Buchhorn, right, from Camp Biloxi, pray with Eric Hanson on the porch of his Katrina-destroyed home in Biloxi, Miss. Hanson said he doesn’t have the money to tear down or repair the home, which has been vacant for three years. He lives in a smaller house on the property.

Rev. Luke Timm, executive pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Rochester, Mich., poses with two of the 29 teenagers who accompanied him to Camp Restore for a week in July—Michael Hansen, 15, and Alexa Bennett, 16.

Teenagers from First Lutheran Church in Freeport, Ill., saw siding for a house in Biloxi, Miss., in July. Pictured are Brittany Rowe, Heather Rimington, and Stephanie Jordan.

A group of volunteers at Camp Biloxi gets ready to start their workday. The camp was opened by Lutheran Disaster Response, a collaborative ministry of the LCMS and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but now is operated by the Synod’s Southern District.

Camp Restore’s Brenda Johnson invites just about every volunteer group at the camp to stop by her restored house, which had five-and-a-half feet of floodwater post-Katrina. For more about Brenda, visit [lcms.org/witness](http://lcms.org/witness).

**Web EXCLUSIVE!**

But, he adds, “we have many more houses to finish than we have completed. I think we will be at this for many more years.”

Volunteers at both Southern District work camps have helped almost 2,000 families get back into their homes to date, with 3,000 more currently on waiting lists.

Schultz says “everybody knows who we are and what we do, and that’s a good and vital witness.”

The Southern District, he adds, will continue its ministry to help the Gulf Coast rebound “as long as there are dollars—and volunteers.”

Christie Kieschnick of RAI’s LINC New Orleans says local Christian churches have turned the disaster “into this incredible evangelical movement.” People are responding to the church unlike ever before, Kieschnick says, because “they’re seeing [Christians] actually be Jesus in the streets” instead of simply worshipping behind closed doors on Sunday mornings.

It’s also brought church and community leaders together to discuss problems and find solutions—an invaluable

According to Sande, “God’s love is evident in the *people*, not the things.

“I’ve been so blessed,” she says, “and the work that’s been done on my house is the least of my blessings.”

**Paula Schlueter Ross is a staff writer for the LCMS Board for Communication Services and a contributing editor for *The Lutheran Witness*.**



# God Sent Angels

## Extending a Helping Hand

By now, we are all familiar with the dramatic pictures from this year's early-summer flooding in the Midwest. Experts estimate that property, personal, agricultural, and business losses may run into the billions.

In July, Rev. Dave Buss, executive director of the Southern District's Recovery Assistance Inc. (RAI) Ministries, sent an e-mail to some 20,000 RAI donors and volunteers, asking them to "help us help the folks affected in the Midwest!"

The flooded states—Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa—"are dear to us," Buss said, because of the thousands of volunteers they have provided to the Gulf Coast since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.

Equipment used to clean homes in Louisiana and Mississippi already has been sent to Midwestern sites, and Buss and other RAI and Southern District staff have connected with their counterparts in the affected districts "to offer our support and expertise, and to walk with them through their time of response," according to Southern District President Kurtis Schultz. —*P.S.R.*

If you'd like to help Gulf Coast or Midwest families who still have needs, here are some ideas from Lutheran relief workers on what you can do:

- **Pray**—for those who are still hurting, and for Lutheran workers there.
- **Volunteer**—a week or more to help out.
- **Give**—a cash or in-kind donation. RAI accepts all kinds of local donations for Gulf Coast families, from bed linens and towels to refrigerators and washing machines. For out-of-state donors, checks are the best option, as they can be used for a wide range of needs. And, on-site purchases help the local economy. To give a tax-deductible donation, make checks payable to "Recovery Assistance Inc." and mail to the RAI office at 9301 Chef Menteur Highway, New Orleans, LA 70127.

To help families affected by this year's Midwestern floods, send donations designated "Flood Relief 2008" to LCMS World Relief and Human Care, P.O. Box 68661, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861. Or call the credit-card gift line at (888) 930-4438. Online gifts also may be made at <http://givenowlcms.org>.

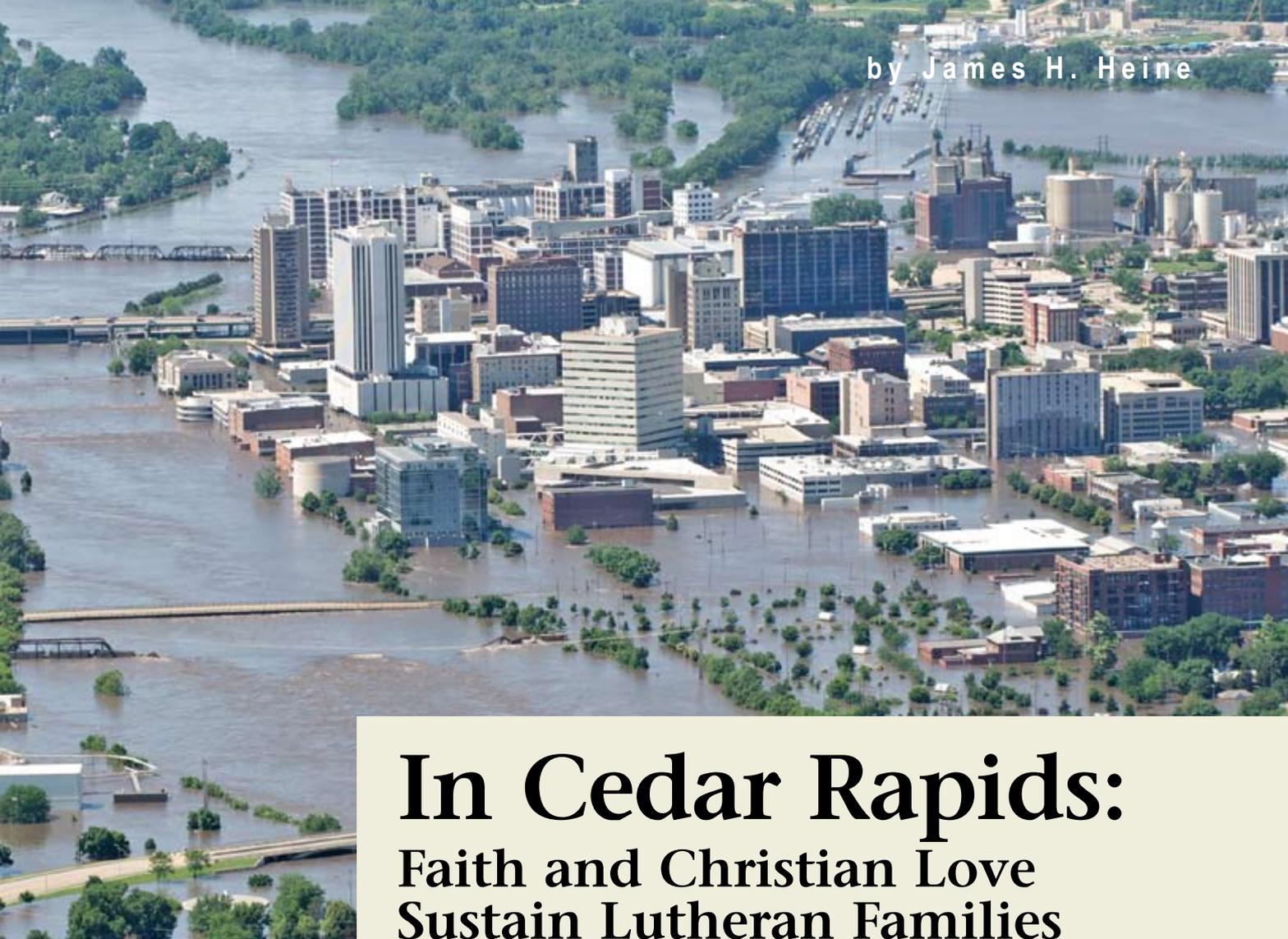
For more information:

RAI: visit its Web site at [www.rainministries.org](http://www.rainministries.org).

Camp Restore: (888) 248-2636 or visit [www.camprestore.org](http://www.camprestore.org).

Camp Biloxi: (228) 594-0008 or visit [www.campbiloxi.org](http://www.campbiloxi.org).





# In Cedar Rapids: Faith and Christian Love Sustain Lutheran Families

On any given Sunday, too much kibitzing before the service is apt to dismay Rev. Jerry Doellinger. He knows some members assembled at Concordia Lutheran Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, use the time to meditate, and sometimes the socializing proves distracting to those who wish to spend the time in prayer.

On June 15, the nave of Concordia was abuzz with conversation—literally—but Doellinger was not in the least dismayed. Two days earlier, on Friday, June 13, the placid Cedar River had crested at 31.12 feet, nearly 20 feet above its normal flood stage and more than 11 feet above the previous record set in 1929. The June 9–21 Cedar River flood inundated much of the central portion of the community.

“This was a visiting of Christian love and outpouring,” Doellinger says about the pre-service socializing June 15. “Everyone was talking and hugging and visiting, trying to touch base with one another. We had 10 families who were displaced by the flood, and another family lost its business. I didn’t know if I was going to get the service started or not.”

The service finally began with a cathartic hymn-sing that allowed a lot of pent-up feelings to be released, Doellinger recalls. “There was a very special spirit here,” he says.

That spirit, anchored in faith, seems typical of other congregations in Cedar Rapids, Doellinger adds. “In visiting with other pastors who had losses—they’re recounting the same kinds of stories.”

Among the congregations in his circuit—Doellinger is counselor for the Iowa District East’s Cedar Rapids North Circuit—Concordia, along with Bethany and Trinity, were probably hit the hardest, Doellinger says. “Trinity had 40 members who were affected. Bethany had eight or nine. Families at St. Paul, Marion; King of Kings, Cedar Rapids; and Zion, Hiawatha, were also affected.”



Left and top: Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was just one of many Midwestern communities affected by early-summer flooding.

Above: Rev. Jerry Doellinger and Denise Block stand beneath an orange stripe that marks the flood level near Block’s home, which is about a mile from the normally placid Cedar River.

# In Cedar Rapids

While significant for the affected congregations, the LCMS numbers reflect just a small portion of the community crippled by the flooding, Doellinger notes. According to Corridor Recovery, an Iowa Web site that serves as a clearinghouse for the metropolitan region that extends along the river, the flood damaged more than 5,000 Cedar Rapids residential parcels and 1,000 commercial parcels.



## Prayers, Tears, and Help

As in New Orleans and along the Gulf Coast, the road to recovery in Cedar Rapids may be long. Driving down Ninth Street and walking into what remains of Tim and Denise Block's Cedar Rapids kitchen brings home the magnitude of the job ahead. Predictably, three weeks after the crest, the empty kitchen walls are covered with spots of mold, and what remains of the cabinets is covered in dark grime. Actually, much of the kitchen, as well as the rest of the main floor and basement, of the once-tidy yellow frame house is piled outside, alongside the curb. (One of the first sights that greets a summer visitor to Cedar Rapids is block after block of refuse piled high along the curbs.)

"We had six feet of water on our first floor," says Denise Block, who teaches seventh and eighth grade at Central Lutheran School in nearby Newhall, Iowa, and along with her family, is a member of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Atkins. "When we evacuated, we thought we might have six inches on the first floor, because of the projected crest. Instead, we got six feet."

As bad as the first floor appears, the basement is worse, Block adds. She even has questions about the structural integrity of the concrete-block foundation. "At this point, we don't think the house is repairable."

Across the street, Concordia members Ron and Heidi McKay face a similar situation. Much of the interior of their home is already bare except for the stud and bearing walls. "We're probably looking at an 80- to 90-percent loss," Ron McKay says, and we've also just learned that both of our jobs may be in jeopardy."

Like many of their Ninth Street neighbors, neither the Blocks nor the McKays have flood insurance. Much of the

street is a mile or more from the Cedar River and outside the river's official 100-year flood plain, Block explains.

"We were designated as living in the 500-year flood plain, so flood insurance was not mandatory," she says. "No one thought we would need it."

Her consolation, Block adds, has been her faith—and the prayers and generous support "of lots of people."

There have been tears, too, she says, not only because of grief, but also because of the great kindness of people.

"I've been thinking, 'What will I talk about with my students this year? What is my message going to be?' It's the Christian love that we have and how God unfolds things for you that you wouldn't expect. Help comes from places and from people you don't know. All of our needs, so far, have been taken care of from the first day of the flood."

There are also the "little things" that you become aware of, Block adds, things that you may not think much about in everyday life. "God put us here with good friends and good co-workers and a good community of churches. It's just been unbelievable, in that way, just as unbelievable as the flood has been."

Doellinger agrees: "I get a little emotional yet, but the way the congregation has come together is just amazing. People that you'd never expect are opening their hearts, their wallets, their doors. They're taking time off work to help people clean up. They're willing to do whatever they can, in so many ways. Yes, the waters may rage, but we lift our eyes past the momentary disaster and we look to the Lord."

Editor's note: In a follow-up conversation shortly before we sent the September *Lutheran Witness* to the printer, Rev. Doellinger reported that the Blocks have opted to purchase another home while the McKays have begun rehabbing their Ninth Street residence. The McKays have also found more secure jobs, he said.

James Heine is the managing editor of *The Lutheran Witness*.



Web EXCLUSIVE!

## 'With the Cross of Jesus'

Despite losing his home to the flooding Cedar River, Harlan Ketelsen (right) plans to keep producing the crosses he has been making for 25 years. Read about Ketelsen and his wife, Marge, at [lcms.org/witness](http://lcms.org/witness).



# Life issues:

## Renewing the Three R's

*Life issues are spiritual issues.* This simple concept forms the foundation for Lutheran churches in dealing with life issues. Yes, they are political, social, and moral, but at their core, they are spiritual.

I admit it. Everything I needed to know I did not learn in kindergarten. But a kindergarten principle still guides me: The importance of simple concepts. "One, two, three," "A, B, C," "Red, Yellow, Blue," "Do, Re, Mi"—such simplicity forms the foundations of math, literature, art, and music.

*Life issues are spiritual issues.* This simple concept forms the foundation for Lutheran churches in dealing with life issues. Yes, they are political, social, and moral, but at their core, they are spiritual. So let's examine the "three R's" that flow from this principle—

*Responsibility, Relevancy, and Resources.* A renewal of these simple basics will enable the church to affect life issues as never before.

### The First R: **Responsibility**

Because life issues are spiritual, the *responsibility* to address them belongs to the church. They are spiritual because the dark thread that ties them together is death. The world promotes death as a god to turn to for help. Society says the death of the unborn solves a crisis pregnancy. The death of human embryos will supposedly solve the problems of chronic diseases. Society says that death through assisted suicide and euthanasia solves the problem of pain and suffering.

Society points people to a god who is the very antithesis of the God proclaimed in Lutheran pulpits. Every Sunday, Lutherans sit in pews after another week of being nudged toward idolatry. Satan remains faithful to his age-old deceit of turning darkness into light. Through words like *choice, right, compassionate, cures, and therapeutic*, he makes death look good, friendly, and a source of hope. He subtly influences



those in Lutheran pews looking up at Lutheran pulpits.

This does not mean Lutheran congregations will be erecting idols to the god of death anytime soon. Sometimes, however, we bow to a less-obvious idol, “Godbut.” Most of us have professed to believe in Godbut at one time or another. “Well, sure, you know, I believe in God . . .” and the next word out of our mouths? “But!” “I believe in God, but it’s my daughter who is pregnant.” “I believe in God, but my husband has Alzheimer’s.” “I believe in God, but I can’t see any purpose for Grandma lying in the nursing home.”

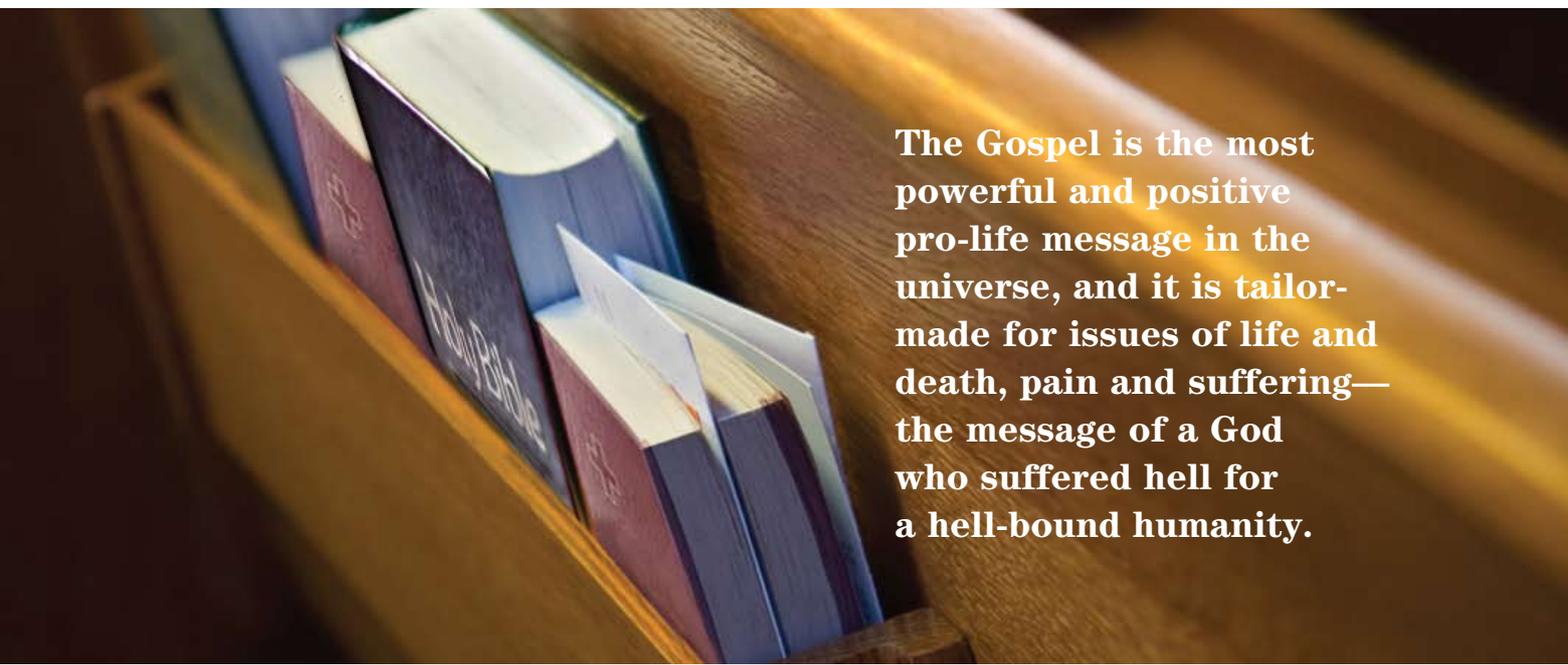
Christ’s people in Lutheran pews looking up at Lutheran pulpits may not be praising the god of death. “Godbut,” however, gets a little homage. The church has

speaks powerfully to people dealing with life issues. But do people in the pew hear it spoken to them?

Dr. Oswald Hoffmann received one of the greatest compliments a preacher can receive. After a sermon at a church’s centennial celebration, a member remarked, “Dr. Hoffmann preached the Gospel right into my life.” Preaching involves more than sending forth nice-sounding words. Preaching connects the Gospel to people’s lives. Life issues provide opportunities for this connection.

### *Relevant Connections*

The Gospel’s call to repentance needs to connect with those who are indifferent to, or in favor of, a “choice” that results in the death of more than 3,000 children each day



**The Gospel is the most powerful and positive pro-life message in the universe, and it is tailor-made for issues of life and death, pain and suffering—the message of a God who suffered hell for a hell-bound humanity.**

the responsibility to deal with issues of life and death, pain and suffering, killing and harming. Lutherans face them, struggle with them, and seek direction in dealing with them. Society points them to death. What direction do they get from the pulpit?

## **The Second R: Relevancy**

That brings us to our second R—the relevancy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in dealing with life issues. The Gospel is the most powerful and positive pro-life message in the universe, and it is tailor-made for issues of life and death, pain and suffering. The message of a God who suffered hell for a hell-bound humanity, who died for those dead in sin, who rose to justify the unjust, who ascended above all to be Lord of all, who sends His Spirit to create faith in faithless hearts, who works repentance, gives forgiveness, brings new life and the certainty of eternal life—this relevant message

in our country and permeates society with the idea that killing is caring.

The value the Gospel gives to life from the moment of conception needs to connect with us all again and again. In a society that equates human value with human ability, we need to hear what God does that bestows value. He knits life together in the womb (Ps. 139:13). His love for this life moved Him to suffer and die for the sins of the world (John 3:16). The journey to this redemptive sacrifice began in a womb (Luke 1:31).

The positive motivation the Gospel brings needs to connect with adolescents and all of us facing temptations. New creations in Christ can make good decisions in Christ. When the flesh wins and sin is acknowledged, the Gospel needs to connect to the pregnant teen with a message of forgiveness and with deeds of love and support. Women and men crushed by an abortion decision in their past need the Gospel of hope and healing connected to them. Failure

to do so gives offense. Our silence says this sin is too big to be forgiven.

Families dealing with ailing parents, chronic disease, or terminal illness need to hear the Gospel connected to them. The Gospel points them to a God who suffered, a God present in suffering, and a God who works in suffering.

Yes, the Gospel is tailor-made for life issues. It calls to repentance, unites us to Christ, transforms and motivates through love. It brings forgiveness, healing, and hope. It points to a victory over sin and death already won. These do not require some emotional ascendancy to claim. They are objective facts made possible through a crucified and living Savior.

### *Articulating the Connection*

The Gospel is tailor-made for life issues, and Lutheran theology articulates the Gospel so well. Three quick examples: First, our understanding of sin and grace levels the playing field and allows us to address these issues, not by lording it over, but by speaking the truth in love. We offer grace, not something we attain, but something from God in Christ, something in which we live.

Second, the distinction between Law and Gospel allows us to boldly call wrong things wrong based on God's Word. This is critically important for Christ's people in a time of relative morality. We boldly call wrong things wrong, not so we can scream and yell, but to lead people to God's work in Christ in dealing with wrong things.

Third, the theology of the cross enables us to see God "hiding" in the midst of all the suffering and darkness and forsakenness of that Friday we call *Good*. Through it all, He accomplished His will. The cross becomes the lens through which we view the suffering and darkness and forsakenness in our lives. Through this lens we see God "hiding" in the midst of it all, accomplishing His will for our spiritual good.

People sitting in Lutheran pews looking up at Lutheran pulpits hear a very *relevant* Gospel that connects to their lives. To fail to connect this relevancy to life issues simply because they are political and controversial produces a silence that loudly proclaims Satan's favorite line, "Did God really say?" But to connect the Gospel to the lives of people dealing with them provides the only message that can truly make a difference and bring hope and change.

Life issues are spiritual issues and the church has the responsibility to address them. The good news is, well, the Good News! God gives His people the most relevant, positive, and powerful pro-life message in the universe! What an honor and joy to make the connection.

**Dr. James I. Lamb is executive director of Lutherans For Life.**



## The Third R: Resources

Life issues become more complex every day. Busy pastors cannot keep up. That brings us to our final "R." Lutherans For Life pledges to renew our efforts to provide resources on a scale and in a manner as never before. We call it *Renewal for Life* (RFL).

RFL seeks renewal of the "three R's." We want to assist congregations to assume their *responsibility* to deal with life issues by connecting them to the *relevancy* of the Gospel and providing the *resources* needed.

RFL will be a top-down approach. We will ask district presidents to encourage circuit counselors to invite LFL to present the details of RFL at a circuit meeting. Pastors will learn that dealing with life issues can be an ongoing part of the ministry of the congregation, easily incorporated into what they are already doing. Rather than something feared, life issues become another opportunity to share the hope of the Gospel.

So stay tuned! Renewal of the "3R's"—*Responsibility, Relevancy, Resources*—coming to a circuit near you! But you need not wait for RFL to renew! Check the resources LFL already has at [lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org). Start connecting the Gospel to life issues today! Lives will be changed. Lives will be saved. —J.L.

## A Word of Hope

*Having an abortion was the greatest tragedy of my life. I lost all self-esteem and self-confidence. I didn't feel worthy of anyone's love, and I went through life wishing I were dead. I spoke to Grace, who loved me unconditionally. With her help I accepted the reality of what I had done and began to accept God's forgiveness for my sin of abortion.*

Founded in 1989, Word of Hope is the compassionate arm of Lutherans For Life. Word of Hope reaches out to men and women who have experienced an abortion in their past. Our national director, Grace Kern, speaks with hundreds of individuals every month, offering Christ's forgiveness in a warm and nonjudgmental atmosphere. If you know of anyone suffering from a past abortion decision, please encourage them to contact Grace at (888) 217-8679 or to visit [word-of-hope.org](http://word-of-hope.org). —J.L.



### Hurting from Abortion?

*A Word of Hope can help.*

888-217-8679

[www.word-of-hope.org](http://www.word-of-hope.org)

*Confidential . . . Caring*

# ALL THIS JAZZ

*The 'jazz song' Christians sing—the Gospel—preaches a more powerful sermon than any silver-tongued orator ever could.*

**W**hen it comes to jazz, I can count what I know on one hand.

*First*, jazz began in the early part of the 20th-century among African Americans in places like New Orleans, St. Louis, and Kansas City. *Second*, jazz arises among people whom society has disenfranchised and marginalized. *Third*, jazz music keeps moving, keeps surprising, and keeps shocking with one melody that recurs over and over again. And *fourth*, that one melody is played out with endless variation and enormous freedom, but the core always stays the same.

That's the sum of what this lead-footed, middle-aged, white man knows about *musical* jazz.

I do, however, know a bit more about another kind of jazz. It's the kind of jazz that really jazzes me up. I call it *Hebrew jazz*.

Like the praises of Jehoshaphat when he defeated the Moabites and Ammonites—"Give thanks to the Lord, for His love endures forever" (2 Chron. 20:21 NIV). Like the cadence that David danced to in Psalm 23—"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want." Like Deborah's thanksgiving when she defeated Sisera—"The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai, before the Lord, the God of Israel" (Judges 5:5).

To find some of the first Hebrew jazz we need to go back to Ex. 15:1, where marginalized Moses says, "I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea."

But even Exodus 15 doesn't get to the root of all this jazz. To find the beginning of the beat, we have to go back to Exodus 1, where in verse 8 the scene is set: "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (KJV). We don't remember the name of this Pharaoh, but we passionately remember the names of our two women who started the melody that has since jazzed up *everything*.

Down in the slave huts in Goshen in Ex. 1:15 we meet them—Shiphrah and Puah. These Hebrew midwives were called to stand before the most powerful man in the ancient world. In his madness this monarch wanted the midwives to assist him in a genocidal policy that would kill Hebrew baby boys. A wave of Pharaoh's hand could mean continued life or instant death. But Shiphrah and Puah defied Pharaoh and resisted his infanticidal



propaganda. In doing so they began the defiant dance of deliverance.

Soon the land of Goshen began tapping to a future and swaying to the Lord's beat. The song picked up momentum when, with the second plague, Pharaoh was so shook up he told Moses to remove the plague of the frogs "tomorrow" (Ex. 8:10). Tomorrow? And by the third plague the empire's magicians couldn't make gnats (Ex. 8:16–19). The cadence got louder as the Lord climactically brought Israel out of the house of slavery with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (Exodus 14).

When they reached the other side of the Red Sea, Miriam and the women, with their tambourines in hand, also began dancing to the beat—"Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea" (Ex. 15:20–21).

This is the primal melody of the entire biblical score. *Against all odds, the Lord helps those who cannot help themselves.* Every believer in every godless ghetto after Moses and Miriam knows that this core always stays the same.

And the empire can't take it, so it does whatever it can to silence our swing of salvation. And it succeeds when we

- reduce the dance of deliverance to the staleness of slogans and the carelessness of clichés;
- are smug enough to "sing" Sinatra: "I did it my way"; cling to treasured controls, nourished angers, and lustful looks;
- return to those things that bind and enslave;
- just like Pharaoh, harden our hearts.

But listen. Can you hear it? There it is, in the distance. The lyrics of life! "The Lord has triumphed gloriously, the horse and rider He has hurled into the sea!" No more brick quotas, no more straw and mud, no more fear, and no more empire!

Our God has more craftiness than the empire's magicians, more compassion than the Hebrew midwives, and more might than all of Pharaoh's horses and chariots. He is the doorway to deliverance, the pathway to peace, the gateway to glory. His mercy is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His love never changes. His grace is sufficient. His Word is enough. And His reign is righteous forevermore!

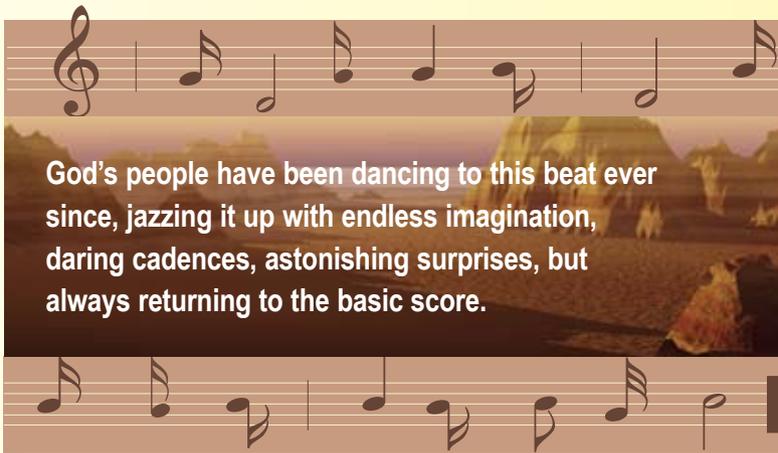
God's people have been dancing to this beat ever since, jazzing it up with endless imagination, daring cadences, astonishing surprises, but always returning to the basic score.

Hannah sings: "The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength" (1 Sam. 2:4). The psalmist celebrates: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will trust in the name of the Lord our God" (Ps. 20:7). David gets it: "It is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle belongs to the Lord" (1 Sam. 17:47). Mother Mary adds her own version: "He has brought down the rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble" (Luke 1:52). St. Paul made it into the Jazz Hall of Fame with this one: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future,

nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39).

We have a name for this beat that keeps moving, keeps surprising, and keeps shocking. We call it the Gospel, for the Gospel boldly announces to the empire, "The Lord has triumphed gloriously, your horse and your rider He has hurled into the sea!"

But the most joyful jazz came out of a situation when the empire marshaled all its horses and chariots to bring on its version of the sounds of silence. To do so it enlisted betrayers and deniers and slappers and beaters and spitters and whippers and mockers. And there were nailers. It jerked the jazz from every station. For three days all the powers of the empire thought they had won.



But on the third day the swing of salvation was amped up for the entire world to hear! "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today." "I Know That My Redeemer Lives." "The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done." "O Sons and Daughters of the King." "This Joyful Eastertide." "Jesus Lives! The Vict'ry's Won!" And through the Church this song goes on!

On its last breath, the empire still seeks to silence those of us who live for all this jazz. It rejoices when ministry is frustrating and overwhelming. It cheers when we lose money and go through depression and doubt. It laughs when we stare into the caskets of our children, our parents, our spouses. But just there, in those places, the song we sing preaches a more powerful sermon than any silver-tongued orator ever could.

Have you lost the beat? Forgotten the rhythm? Misplaced the lyrics? Don't remember the melody? Then listen again to Moses and Miriam. And as you do, don't forget the final refrain composed by the King of Jazz: "I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" (Rev. 1:18).

**Dr. R. Reed Lessing is director of the graduate school and associate professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary.**



In the middle of a cornfield in western Iowa, God is using ordinary people and an old set of farm buildings to accomplish His work.



Ablaze

# Mission Central: Ablaze for Missions and Missionaries

Two Saturdays a month, Lee Umland of Sioux City, Iowa, packs his clothes and presentation materials and hits the road. Umland—often accompanied by his wife, Sharon—typically drives more than 100 miles to his destination, where he is welcomed warmly and invited to share a meal. Umland rises the next morning to make his presentation and lead discussions.

Every weekend, Gary Thies boards a single-engine airplane in Mapleton, Iowa, his hometown. The pilot flies Thies more than 300 miles to his destination, where they are greeted, offered a home-cooked meal, and given a place to sleep. Thies then spends his Sunday sharing stories, returning to Mapleton late in the day.

Traveling salesmen? Corporate executives?  
Not quite.

Although it's true that Umland, Thies, and others in their organization, Mission Central, schedule presentations all over the Midwest, theirs is a different sort of "pitch." You won't find their "corporation" on the NASDAQ or the Dow Jones, or in the pages of *The Wall Street Journal*. Mission Central's buildings do not sport a logo created by a slick New York advertising agency. By the world's standards, the

"employees" of Mission Central are unqualified, unremarkable, and certainly not "normal."

Which suits them just fine.

## A Basement Brigade

In 1993 Thies was working as president of a northern Iowa bank, a significant achievement for a man who never went to college. Yet Thies, a lifelong Lutheran keenly interested in missions, felt called to do something else, something more, something for his Savior, Jesus.

"I kept feeling that we needed to raise awareness about worldwide mission work," Thies says. "I also felt that whatever we did, it needed to be different from what 'the world does' when it comes to supporting our dear missionaries." After much prayer, research, and discussion with his wife, Maxine, Thies resigned from his banking position in June 1994 and began working earnestly from his basement.

Don Gettner, a 73-year-old former soil consultant/agronomist and Papua New Guinea missionary, has been with Thies since the beginning of Mission Central. Gettner volunteers his time as print/publicity director, producing flyers, handouts, and presentation materials.



Left: A tour group visits Mission Central.

Insert: A “before” picture of the facility.

Above and right: Gary Thies, speaking to Mission Central visitors, left a successful banking career to found the mission organization, which is staffed by volunteers.

“It didn’t surprise me a bit when Gary decided to quit his job as bank president and do this. . . . It’s been on his heart for a while,” Gettner says. “We all started out in our basements—Gary called us ‘the Basement Brigade.’”

Umland, the owner of Ace Sign Company in Sioux City and a friend of Thies for more than 20 years, was surprised but not shocked at the career change.

“Gary has always had a big heart for missions and growing the kingdom of God,” Umland notes. He and Sharon began working with Mission Central at the start, supporting a variety of missionaries financially and prayerfully.

Today, more than 40 people—including seven pilots—volunteer their time and resources for Mission Central, Thies observes.

## Go and Tell

Thies describes Mission Central as a clearinghouse for LCMS World Mission and the Iowa and Nebraska LCMS districts. Part of its work is matching LCMS missionaries with mission partners to support them in prayer, in relationship, and, when God provides, with financial resources.

Mission Central mission partners are individuals, families, or congregations who, according to Thies, are moved by the power of the Holy Spirit to take action for the Kingdom.

“These are people who listen to the story of Jesus speaking to His disciples on Easter Sunday, hear Him say, ‘As the Father sent Me, now I’m sending you,’ and take His message to heart,” Thies says. “They don’t sit around and say, ‘Gee, I wish the congregation would do something’ or ‘Gee, I wish the pastor would do something.’ They listen to the stories, and they get involved.”

Mission Central’s focus on being in relationship means that Thies and other presenters always meet potential mission supporters face to face.

“People are suffering from information overload—there’s too much stuff coming through the Internet, through our e-mail, too many brochures delivered through U.S. mail,” Thies says. “We come in person and tell the story.”

## Welcome Strangers

After nine years, it became clear that Mission Central’s “Basement Brigade” could not keep up with the growth



‘I kept feeling that we needed to raise awareness about worldwide mission work. I also felt that whatever we did, it needed to be different from what “the world does” when it comes to supporting our dear missionaries.’

—Gary Thies

of its missionary/mission-partner network and remain “underground.” Thies longed for a central location that people could visit, hear the stories, and see artifacts gathered during mission work. He also hoped to establish a guest house for visiting missionaries and their families.

“We began praying about a more permanent location for Mission Central,” Thies says, noting that what happened next seems like a miracle.

“I got a call from the family who owned several farm buildings across the road from our house,” Thies remembers. “They were getting ready to sell the property but wondered if we could use the buildings for Mission Central.”

More than 100 people volunteered to help renovate the buildings. When the work was complete, Mission Central had an office, a mission museum, and a guesthouse.

“This year alone 20 busloads of people toured the museum and learned about worldwide mission work,” Thies says. “People come from all over—from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Indiana, North Dakota—we even had two families come from Toronto, Canada.”

### Ordinary People Work Here

Some volunteers, like Nebraska attorney and Mission Central webmaster Dave Reddel, attribute the excitement surrounding Mission Central to Thies’ boundless enthusiasm, energy, and encouragement.

“Gary is a storyteller. People know he’s not just a guy coming in, making a presentation, and leaving,” says Reddel, a member of King of Kings Lutheran Church in Omaha, Neb. “He’s completely passionate about missions.”

Reddel’s work with Mission Central began when Thies made a presentation at King of Kings. At the time, Reddel was heavily involved in the church’s media ministry.

“I saw that Gary was using an old broken-

down projector and transparencies. I suggested there were a lot of things he could do with technology to help his presentation,” Reddel says. “Gary’s eyes just lit up, and he said, ‘Well, you’re going to help me do that.’” What Reddel suggested led him to do a lot of different things for Mission Central, including creating [www.missioncentral.us](http://www.missioncentral.us), which currently gets more than 5,000 hits a month.

Other volunteers, like Marlene Brocshus, were also looking for a way to serve. Brocshus, a member of St. John’s Lutheran in May City, Iowa, lives about 90 miles north of Mission Central but visits as often as she can to welcome missionaries and hear their stories. She became prayer coordinator in 2001, using e-mail to collect prayer requests and send them to the Mission Central “prayer warriors,” and to welcome new missionaries to the prayer ministry.

“When we started, Gary was traveling around Iowa, so our e-mails were fairly local,” she notes. “Now we have prayer partners all over the world. It’s amazing, some of the things that have happened with all the prayers shared by people.”

### Humble Service

Thies says this about Mission Central’s volunteers: “God has brought to us very special people just at the right time to help with His work. All of them play an important part in God’s kingdom.”

Gettner laughs at the title—print/publicity director—Thies gave him. “I don’t do that much,” he says. But while “not doing much,” Gettner has worn out four copiers, two computers, and a fax machine. He says he enjoys working with Thies simply because it keeps him busy and “keeps my mind off things.”

Brocshus downplays her involvement as well. Inexperienced with computers—she worked as an emergency-room nurse for 40 years—she



**Web EXCLUSIVE!**

## Mission Central: Pilots Help Tell the Story

has improved her desktop skills and finds it rewarding.

"God is working through me—I'm not doing anything," she says. "I can't do anything by myself."

Although he works 60 hours a week running his business, Umland says he feels privileged to visit congregations twice a month.

"It's amazing that God uses even a foolish farm boy from Minnesota to go out and work for His kingdom," Umland says. "I get a whole lot more out of meeting people than they ever get from me, especially when we talk about the miracles that happen in the mission field."

"With the help of Mission Central volunteers, we have awakened many congregations and people who didn't understand the mission of the church," Thies says. "It is my hope and prayer that more and more people will see that God can do miracles using ordinary people, just as He did according to Acts 4:13: 'when they . . . realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and took note that these men had been with Jesus [NIV].'"

**Diane Strzelecki is a Chicago writer and a member of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Palatine, Ill.**



Nate Predoehl (above), a lifelong Lutheran, first heard about Mission Central from his mother, who had seen Gary Thies speak at an LWML event. He later met Thies at his church, Good Shepherd Lutheran, in Gretna, Neb., after Thies' presentation there.

"After he learned that I was a corporate pilot, Gary asked right away if I could take him on the plane," Predoehl says. "I said no, of course—that plane wasn't at my disposal—but God knew that wasn't the end of the story." The next time Thies asked, Predoehl decided to poll some of his former flight students and pilot friends to see what they would say.

For a look at how Nate Predoehl, a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Gretna, Neb., and a half-dozen fellow pilots lend a hand to Mission Central, visit [lcms.org/witness](http://lcms.org/witness) and click on the link for this story.

# MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

*When you take away the hype, the poor scholarship, and the overblown misinterpretations, all that remains of many recent biblical ‘discoveries’ is ‘more junk on Jesus,’ observes Dr. Paul L. Maier.*

**B**y now we’ve come to expect it: Once, twice a year or more, some “sensational” new archaeological or manuscript discovery in the Bible lands threatens to undermine Christianity, so it is claimed. Or it may be the radical opinion of some revisionist scholar that gets media attention, sending worried believers to their pastors. It all seems to be part of a trend that I call “More Junk on Jesus,” since so many of the “discoveries” don’t even apply or are misinterpreted, while most of the “new, scholarly insights” foisted on a credulous public are neither new nor scholarly. All of them have this in common: They are vastly overblown.

Consider the most recent offenders.

## THE JUDAS GOSPEL

This document arrived, courtesy of the *National Geographic*, just in time for Easter two years ago. Rather than succeeding in its effort to turn Judas into a hero, this Gnostic gospel was incorrectly translated, and the proffered text is an embarrassment to serious scholarship.

The church is not “trying to hide” this piece of ancient literature: Feel free to Google “Judas Gospel” and print out all of its 12 pages—if you wish to waste paper—or just read it off your computer screen. You will be astonished that it is mere word-salad reflecting Gnosticism, that most ancient Christian heresy, and full of terms with Gnostic jargon, such as *luminaries*, *aeons*, *demiurges*, *demons*, *firmaments*, and *secret knowledge*.

All the *Judas Gospel* does is to affirm the reliability of that great defender of the faith, Irenaeus of Lyons, who, around A.D.

180, wrote *Against Heresies*. In this book, he complained about a pathetic sect that had named itself after the world’s first murderer—Cain—and called themselves the Cainites, who published a ridiculous work called the *Judas Gospel*.

## THE ‘JESUS FAMILY TOMB’

Last year, again just in time for Easter, the Discovery Channel gifted us with the story of a burial cavern accidentally uncovered at Talpiot in south Jerusalem. (Never mind that the find was made back in 1980, and that this was now the third attempt to turn it into a sensation.) Inside the cavern were 10 ossuaries (bone boxes), six of which are inscribed

with names that include *Jesus*, *Joseph*, and *Mary*. The TV program, hosted by an overenthusiastic-but-woefully-mistaken Canadian film producer, Simcha Jacobovici, claimed that another of the ossuaries with the name *Mariamene e Mara* referred to Mary Magdalene, thus “assuring” us with 600-to-1 odds that this was the family tomb of Jesus, which contained an ossuary with His bones. Because names like *Jesus* or *Mary* were common, and for at least a dozen other reasons, this was impossible, but the clincher was this: Several weeks after the telecast, the Israeli archaeologists who were involved in the dig checked their records as to the bones in that particular ossuary. Inside were two sets of women’s bones; hence their original translation was correct: “Mariamme and Martha,” not “Mary Magdalene.”



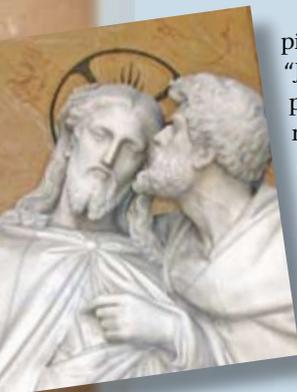
## JESUS WALKS ON ICE?

Then, of course, there was the logic-challenged climatographer from a Florida university who explained how Jesus could walk on water. He was treading on ice! Never mind that the Gospel account has Peter joining Jesus on this water-walk—for a while, at any rate, until he was frightened by the wind and the waves. An amazing body of water, the Sea of Galilee: Evidently the northern half was a sheet of ice, while the southern half must have had open waters!

And finally, the most recent rubbish on the Redeemer:

## THE ‘GABRIEL REVELATION’

An oblong, three-foot stone tablet, originally found on the east shore of the Dead Sea and presently owned by David Jeselsohn, an Israeli-Swiss collector, tells of a suffering Messiah who died and would rise in three days, so it is claimed. The stone was not found in the course of an archaeological dig, nor was it engraved; it contained lettering in ink, much of it faded. Lettering styles placed the script in the first century B.C., according to specialists, thus before Jesus’ time. As a result, headlines in major publications screamed “Will a Stone Tablet Shake Christianity?” and “Stone Tablet Casts Doubt on the Resurrection.”





by Paul L. Maier

This, of course, is ridiculous for many reasons, but two in particular: First, the text itself is by no means clear or agreed upon by scholars. It is rather pock-marked by questionable renderings and many elisions (omissions) where no readings are possible, especially a crucial line 86. And yet Israel Knohl, professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is bold to translate the critical passage regarding a suffering Messiah: "In three days you will rise. . . I, Gabriel, command you." One doubts that in the end this will be the official translation.

Second, even if this reading were accepted, what's the point? Some commentators have suggested that this is where the idea of a suffering Messiah first arose in Judaism, which is absurd. The Old Testament has many passages regarding the Messiah who will suffer, e.g., Gen. 3:15, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 52 and 53. Nor is this where a resurrection concept first arose in Judaism. If that were the case, how could the Pharisees before Jesus' day believe in a resurrection? Accordingly, the Gabriel stone actually supports rather than subverts the biblical record.

What is unconscionable is Professor Knohl's conclusion that the Christian Gospels adapted the existing concept of a suffering Messiah who would rise in three days as a pattern for their own stories about Jesus. Since he had come to this mistaken conclusion long before the Gabriel stone appeared, his translation and response are highly suspect and not shared by other scholars in Israel. Other translations of the "Gabriel stone" will doubtless be attempted, none of which will pose any threat to Christianity.

All these vaunted "sensational" discoveries are discounted by serious scholars. Will they undermine Christianity? Only if someone with a peashooter can demolish the Rock of Gibraltar.

**Dr. Paul L. Maier, the author most recently of *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* (co-written with Hank Hanegraaf), is second vice president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Russell H. Seibert Professor of Ancient History at Western Michigan University.**



*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

PHILLIP FRAHM resigned from the Commissioned Minister–DCE roster, effective April 30. GINGER VOSE, Rosell, Ga., was removed from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective Feb. 15. STEVEN A. GERTH, Seward, Neb., was removed from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective March 18. BARBARA FAHSHOLZ, New Castle, Del., resigned from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective April 1. JENNIFER BLACKWOOD, Winter Park, Fla., resigned from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective May 15. JILL STAFFORD, Clermont, Fla., resigned from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective April 20. MICHELLE MCCLURE, Marion, Iowa, resigned from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective May 15. AMANDA HALPIN, Ocala, Fla., was removed from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective June 4. JOHN DRESSER, Swanzy, N.H., was removed from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective June 4. SARAH CZAPLEWSKI, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., resigned from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective June 12. ANDREW NOVY, Delray Beach, Fla., resigned

from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective June 12. LAURIE ERIKSEN, Boynton Beach, Fla., resigned from the Commissioned Minister–Teacher roster, effective June 12.—Dr. Gerhard C. Michael Jr., president, LCMS Florida-Georgia District.

REV. ROBERT GEHRKE, Lino Lakes, Minn., was appointed circuit counselor of the East St. Paul Circuit, replacing REV. MARLIN HARRIS, who previously held the position.—Dr. Lane R. Seitz, president, LCMS Minnesota South District.

REV. RANDALL MORITZ, St. Luke, Wood Lake, Minn., was appointed circuit counselor for the Montevideo Circuit, replacing REV. DENNIS SCHULTZ, who retired.—Rev. Donald J. Fondow, president, LCMS Minnesota North District.

REV. PETER AVE-LALLEMANT, Thompson’s Station, Tenn., was appointed circuit counselor of the Nashville-North Circuit 4, replacing REV. MARK KOCH, Madison, Tenn., who accepted a call to another district.—Rev. Ken Lampe, president, LCMS Mid-South District.

REV. GARY WRIGHT, East Moline, Ill., was appointed Rock Island circuit counselor, replacing DR. DAN OLSON, who accepted a call in another district.—Rev. David J. Bueltmann, LCMS Central Illinois District.

## Official Notices— Colloquies

RICHARD SANSBURY, Toledo, Ohio, has submitted an application for the Pastoral Colloquy Program through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. MYCHAL THOM, Rochester Hill, Mich., and MARIANNE GORDON, Toledo, Ohio, have submitted 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, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

RACHEL KLOSTERMAN, Seymour, Ind., and HEATHER NITZEL, Bloomington, Ill., have completed the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. They are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Mark A. Waldron, Director of Teacher Colloquy, Concordia University Chicago, 7400 Augusta St., River Forest, IL 60305-1499.

SARAH MARTIN, Houston, Texas, and TAMRA CRAIG, Spring, Texas, have completed the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. They are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Jim McConnell, Assistant Colloquy Program Director, Concordia University Texas, 3400 Interstate Highway 35 N., Austin, TX 78705-2799.

## Official Notices— Requests for Reinstatement

JOE C. FAIRCHILD, Virginia Beach, Va., and QUENTIN M. GENKE, Greensboro, N.C., have applied for reinstatement to the Minister of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. BARBARA A. PAAPE, Sheboygan, Wis., 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 Oct. 5.—Dr. Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

## Is a New Beginning Possible?

I found out recently that over a six-month period my husband had an affair with one of his co-workers. I was so devastated and heartbroken that I told my best friend. She said I should divorce him because I have biblical reasons. I don't know what to do. I thought we had a good marriage.

Your feelings are understandable, given the tremendous emotional upheaval you've been through. Your husband's choice to have an affair has been a deep betrayal of what you felt was a good marriage. As painful as the experience has been, I would encourage you not to give up on your marriage. Genuine repentance, forgiveness, and healing are possible.

Sharing your heartache with a close friend is certainly a normal tendency, and you needed the compassion she offered. I would recommend, however, that you refrain from speaking with other friends or family about your husband's infidelity. God joined you together as one flesh, and your marital struggles are best restricted to a small circle—your pastor, a Christian counselor, or another trusted individual—as you work through the issues. Going beyond these boundaries might cause undue difficulty and embarrassment.

Under the forgiveness offered through the cross of Christ, a new beginning and rewarding relationship are possible. Which direction your future together takes will

depend on your husband's—and your—willingness to work toward the recovery of your marriage. This will require that your husband repent of his sin, turn away from his ungodly ways, and eliminate all contact with the other woman. Because they are co-workers, some options might include requesting reassignment or even seeking a new job. Availing himself of confession and absolution is vital for your husband, and remaining connected to the church through worship and the sacraments is God's desire for both of you.

Genuine honesty and forgiveness will go a long way toward restoring your marriage. But nothing will erase the memory of his affair from your mind. I tell couples that forgiveness is a gift, a promise, and a process. The forgiveness you offer your husband is the very gift God offers you; the promise is to not raise the memory of the affair to shame or manipulate your husband, and like a long and sometimes grueling journey, it is also a process.

It is also important that, with the help of a Christian counselor, you seek to address the underlying factors that contributed to the affair, seek to establish clear expectations about future behavior, and gain practical wisdom for rebuilding a healthy marriage.

**Dr. Randy Schroeder is assistant professor in the Pastoral Ministry and Missions Department at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.**

**Send your questions to Family Counselor, *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295. Please include your name and address.**

## Notice to Promote to Continuing-Level (Tenure)

The Board of Regents of Concordia University, River Forest, Ill., herewith gives notice of intent to grant tenure to MARY GOETTING. Any comments concerning this intent should be addressed within six weeks after publication of this notice to Dr. John Johnson, Executive Officer, Board of Regents, Concordia University, 7400 Augusta St., River Forest, IL 60305-1499; fax: (708) 209-3534.

## Call for Nominations

**LCMS Board for Pastoral Education (BPE)** seeks nominations for **adviser for personal growth/leadership development** to work on the Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, campus.

The adviser will report administratively to the BPE's executive director and, while on campus, work under the seminary president or his designee. The adviser administers testing approved by the BPE; reports results; advises; works with students in personal skill development and provides counsel; advises

the admissions committee regarding the suitability of candidates; advises in the certification process; assists in counseling newly placed graduates during transition to service; works in collaboration with the seminary administration and faculty and/or faculty committees; and provides reports and information to the BPE and the Council of Presidents and/or its committees.

The nominee must be an ordained pastor with at least five years of pastoral ministry service (preferred are candidates with formal post-graduate education in theology and/or the behavioral sciences); an active member of an LCMS congregation; faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; supportive of the Synod's Constitution, Bylaws and policies; possess a demonstrated facility for innovative and creative leadership and effective teaching and competence in oral and written communication; possess skills in the collegial process; and possess a passion and commitment to the professional and personal development of individuals for ministry.

Submit nominations by Sept. 30 to Barbara Ryan, Executive Director of Human Resources, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; [barbara.ryan@lcms.org](mailto:barbara.ryan@lcms.org); fax: (314) 996-1121.

## TEACHING TOURS

**Rev. D. Reiner, LCMS Pastor**

**Israel & Jordan**

New & Old Testament Biblical Sites  
May 4 – 15, 2009

**Germany, Austria, & Switzerland**

(Luther land - Oberammergau  
Passion Play)  
May 13 – 24, 2010

**Contact for Brochures:**

406-752-1205 or [reiner@centurytel.net](mailto:reiner@centurytel.net)

## Positions

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

### Manager of Emerging Technologies

**Concordia Publishing House** (St. Louis, MO) currently has an opening for a **Manager of Emerging Products**. The Manager of Emerging Products is responsible for the research, initial development, refinement, and implementation of potential new electronic products and services for CPH.

Candidates must possess a strong understanding of resources needed by LCMS churches and schools to enhance their ministry; BA/BS in IT, MIS, or a related field, advanced degree preferred; theological education desirable; 3+ years experience in a digital technology position; parish experience preferred.

To apply candidates may send their resume and cover letter to [cphresume@cph.org](mailto:cphresume@cph.org).

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

**Concordia College—New York, Bronxville, N.Y.**, seeks to fill the following positions: **vice-president for administration, director of alumni and church relations, and assistant registrar**.

**Concordia University, Irvine, Calif.**, seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **dean, School of Education; and dean, School of Arts and Sciences**.

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 50 words or less 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., Sept. 20 for the November issue). Send notices to karen.higgins@lcms.org.—Ed.

**Ascension, Marianna, Fla.**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary at 3 p.m., Sept. 7, with guest speaker Rev. Wallace Schulz, former speaker for the Lutheran Hour radio broadcast. For more information, call (850) 526-2248 or e-mail at [billandmaryduncan@msn.com](mailto:billandmaryduncan@msn.com).

**Shepherd of the Valley, Salmon, Idaho**, will celebrate its 30th anniversary on Sept. 7 at an outdoor worship service, with lunch and fellowship to follow. For more information, contact the church office at (208) 756-4429, or e-mail [sotv123@yahoo.com](mailto:sotv123@yahoo.com).

**Concordia Lutheran Church, Conover, N.C.**, former site of Concordia College, will celebrate its 130th anniversary on Sept. 14. Dr. Alan Harre, past president of Valparaiso University, will be guest speaker at the morning services. The Lenoir-Rhyne College a capella choir will premier a composition by Dr. Paul Weber at the 7 p.m. vesper service. For more information, call (828) 464-3324.

**Salem, Blue Island, Ill.**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary at the 2 p.m. service, Saturday, Sept. 27. Rev. Ken Klaus, former Lutheran Hour speaker, will be guest preacher. Former members are asked to send names, addresses, and telephone numbers to Salem Lutheran Church, 12951 S. Maple Ave., Blue Island, IL 60406.

**Christ, Coos Bay, Ore.**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary with a celebration service at 10:30 a.m., Oct. 5, followed by a seacoast dinner at noon and a time of remembrance and praise at 2:30 p.m. Former pastors will preach. Contact the church office at (541) 267-3851, or visit online at [www.ccls-cb.org](http://www.ccls-cb.org).

**St. John's, Conover, N.C.**, will celebrate its 210th anniversary throughout 2008. Special services are planned for Oct. 5, with guest preacher Dr. Carl Fickenscher II, and on Nov. 16, with Dr. Wallace Schulz as guest preacher.

**Faith, Mountain Home, Idaho**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with special activities and a worship service on Oct. 11–12. Contact the church office at (208) 587-4130 or e-mail [faith.mtnhome@questoffice.net](mailto:faith.mtnhome@questoffice.net).

**Salem, Affton, Mo.**, will begin a year-long celebration of its 100th anniversary on Oct. 11–12, followed by a catered dinner. Former Pastor Luther Brunette will be guest preacher. Special services follow on the second weekend of each month. Contact the church office at (314) 352-4454 or e-mail [slcoffice@mcleaduse.net](mailto:slcoffice@mcleaduse.net).

**Jehovah El Buen Pastor, Chicago, Ill.**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Oct. 19. Former pastor Rev. Gale Schmidt will preach at both the 10 a.m. English service and the 11:30 a.m. Spanish service. An anniversary dinner and program will be held at the Garden Walk Banquet Hall. For more information and reservations, contact the church office at (773) 342-5854, or e-mail [jehovahlutheran@hotmail.com](mailto:jehovahlutheran@hotmail.com).

**St. Paul, The Grove (Gatesville), Texas**, will conclude its 125th anniversary celebration on Reformation Sunday, Oct. 26, with a 10:15 a.m. festival service. Rev. Kenneth Hennings, Texas District president, will be guest preacher. An 11:45 a.m. meal and program are scheduled, along with a climactic festival service at 1:45 p.m., with LCMS President, Dr. Gerald Kieschnick, as guest preacher. A reception will follow. For more information, e-mail [pastor@stpaulthegrove.org](mailto:pastor@stpaulthegrove.org).

**Peace, Hastings, Neb.**, will celebrate its 60th anniversary at 8 and 10:30 a.m., Oct. 26. Rev. Clint Poppe of the Nebraska District will be the keynote speaker. A noon meal will be served, followed by a program. For more information, contact the church office at (402) 462-9023.

**Good Shepherd, Centralia, Mo.**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a 10 a.m. celebration service on Oct. 26, with former pastors participating. A noon dinner and program will follow. For dinner reservations, contact Palmyra Rawlings at (573) 682-3285, or e-mail [tpraw421@juno.com](mailto:tpraw421@juno.com).

**Our Savior, Whitefish Bay, Wis.**, will celebrate its 75th anniversary at the 9 a.m. divine service on Nov. 16, with Dr. Dale A. Meyer, president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as guest preacher. A program and dinner will follow. Contact the church office at (414) 332-4458, or visit online at [www.oursaviorwfb.org](http://www.oursaviorwfb.org).

**Our Redeemer, Enfield, Conn.**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary at the 4 p.m. service on Nov. 23. Special events are planned for the year, culminating with a festival service on Oct. 4, 2009. Rev. James Keurulainen, president of the New England District, will be guest preacher. Contact the church office at (860) 749-3167 or e-mail [lcortc@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lcortc@sbcglobal.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

**ABRAHAM, MARK WALTER**; Aug. 8, 1954, Waseca, Minn., to April 17, 2008, Minneapolis, Minn.; son of Loren and Norma (Yess) Abraham; graduated Fort Wayne, 1999. Served 1999–2008. Ministries/parishes: Alta, Iowa; Fargo, N.D.; Iowa West District circuit counselor, 2003–2007. Survivors: Wanda (Linde) Abraham; sons: Todd, Corey, Christian; daughter: Renae. Funeral: April 21, 2008, Fargo, N.D.; interment: April 22, 2008, Janesville, Minn.

**CROSMER, ARTHUR JOHN**; June 23, 1924, Roundup, Mont., to June 16, 2008, Twin Falls, Idaho; son of Elmer and Alvina (Erick) Crosmer; graduated St. Louis, 1949. Served 1949–1989. Ministries/parishes: Powell, Wyo.; Rapid City, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Twin Falls, Idaho; Northwest District circuit counselor 1994–2001; South Dakota District President; retired 1989. Preceded in death by his daughter, Kay Brown. Survivors: Vera (Becker) Crosmer; sons: Paul, Joel; daughter: Charity Hiroe. Funeral and interment: June 20, 2008, Twin Falls, Idaho.

**EFRAIMSON, CARL ROBERT**; Aug. 25, 1920, Armourdale Township, N.D., to Feb. 15, 2008, Colorado Springs, Colo.; son of Alfred and Enma (Anderson) Efraimson; graduated Springfield, 1958. Served 1958–1973, 1977–1982, 1984–1985. Ministries/parishes: Ingham, Queensland, Australia; Nolulu, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Dent, Dora Township, Verdale, Bartlett Township, Osakis, Minn.; Leigh, Howells, Neb.; Wilson, Waldo, Wis.; Lidgerwood, Claire City, S.D.; retired 1994. Preceded in death by his wife, Ellen (Karjalainen) Efraimson. Survivors: daughters: Carla Sutherland, Danielle. Funeral and interment: Feb. 22, 2008, Menahga, Minn.

**FRIEDRICH, ROLAND GEORGE**; Dec. 17, 1927, Marysville, Kan., to May 28, 2008, Tomball, Texas; son of Fred and Agnes (Stohs) Friedrichs; graduated Springfield, 1954. Served 1954–1992. Ministries/parishes: Finlayson, Bruno, Willow River, Minn.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; Beloit, Wis.; Amarillo, Houston, Texas; retired 1992. Survivors: Ruth (Korth) Friedrichs; sons: Rick, Ross; daughters: Rosalyn Henze, Renee Abrams. Funeral and interment: June 2, 2008, Houston, Texas.

**GLASS, DONALD PEARSON**; July 29, 1937, Washington, D.C., to June 16, 2008, Knoxville, Tenn.; son of Claude and Elisabeth (Holder) Glass; graduated Springfield, 1964. Ministries/parishes: Brampton, Ontario, Canada; Helena, Ark.; Hopkinsville, Ky.; Knoxville, Tenn.; Mid-South District circuit counselor 1997–2001; retired 2000. Survivors: Marilyn (Manthey) Glass; sons: Donald, Timothy, Daniel. Funeral: June 22, 2008, Knoxville, Tenn.; cremation.

**HOARD, SAMUEL L. SR.**; April 16, 1927, St. Louis, Mo., to Nov. 30, 2007, Orlando, Fla.; son of Robert Sr. and Leah (Brown) Hoard; graduated St. Louis, 1957. Ministries/parishes: Atlantic District missionary to Newark, Montclair, N.J.; Brooklyn, N.Y.; Kansas City, Mo.; Orlando, Fla.; Board of Mission Services, military chaplain; retired 1992. Survivors: Mary (Stuart) Hoard; sons: Samuel Jr., Joel. Funeral: Dec. 8, 2007, Orlando, Fla.; interment: Arlington, Va.

## Back to School: Test Preparation

One night, after they had helped their son, Mike, with his homework and then tucked him safely in bed, Mike's parents overheard this prayer just after they closed his bedroom door: "Now I lay me down to rest. I hope to pass tomorrow's test. If I should die before I wake, that's one less test I'll have to take."

Philip Schuppel  
Davis, W.Va.

## Horticulture Class

When she was in college, our daughter initially had trouble managing her money. After sending a few checks her way, I hinted gently that the "money tree in the garden" was beginning to lose its leaves. In her next e-mail, she ended with this note: "Oh, yes, Dad, please remember to water the tree out back."

George Kottwitz  
Edwardsville, Ill.

## A Math Quiz

I could tell that my grandson (and acolyte) Jonah was serious when he took me aside Easter afternoon and said he did not understand my sermon that morning. "Grandpa, you said, 'Jesus came forth from the tomb.'"

"Yes," I replied, "I did."



"Well, then," Jonah continued, "if He came *fourth*, who were the first three?"

I'm glad Jonah knows his numbers. Now I must work on his theology!

Rev. R. John Perling  
First Lutheran Church  
Los Angeles, Calif.

**JIROVEC, DYMANN LEO;** July 1, 1952, Moose Lake, Minn., to June 16, 2008, Bloomington, Ill.; son of George and Marcella (Groth) Jirovec; graduated Fort Wayne, 1980. Served 1980–2008. Ministries/parishes: Marion, Parker, S.D.; Waterville, Minn.; Houston, Mercedes, Texas; Broadlands, Normal, Ill.; Central Illinois District circuit counselor 1996–1997. Survivors: Dawn (Dreger) Jirovec; daughters: Amanda Gondick, Megan Williams, Emily. Funeral and interment: June 20, 2008, Bloomington, Ill.

**LOOSE, GEORGE A. SR.;** July 28, 1920, Campbell Township, Ind., to Nov. 12, 2007, Winter Park, Fla.; son of Rev. Frederick and Anna (Breitenbach) Loose; graduated St. Louis, 1945. Ministries/parishes: University City, Mo.; Baltimore, Md.; Pompano Beach, Fla.; retired 1982. Survivors: Shirley (Ronsick) Loose; sons: George Jr., Alan, Fredrick; daughter: Anita Rockett. Memorial service: Nov. 15, 2007, Orlando, Fla.; cremation.

**RUFF, PAUL A.;** May 21, 1936, Cleveland, Ohio, to Feb. 25, 2008, Sebring, Fla.; son of Lawrence and Margaret (Smith) Ruff; graduated St. Louis, 1960. Served 1960–2000. Ministries/parishes: Cairo, Shelton, Omaha, Neb.; Bradenton, Fla.; Florida-Georgia District circuit counselor 1990–1994, 1996–1997; retired 2000. Survivors: Janice (Still) Ruff; son: Mark; daughter: Victoria. Memorial services: March 10, 2008, Sebring, Fla.; March 24, 2008, Bradenton, Fla.; cremation.

**WENZEL, MARTIN HENRY;** Jan. 3, 1918, Center Township, Wis., to May 7, 2008, Rugby, N.D.;

son of Rev. Frederick and Anna (Henning) Wenzel; graduated St. Louis, 1943. Served 1943–1978. Ministries/parishes: Tenstrike, Hinckley, Hinckley Rural, Blackduck, Cass Lake, Minn.; Willow City, Rugby, Glenburn, Lynch, N.D.; Kemmerer, Evanston, Wyo.; Humboldt, Pawnee City, Neb.; retired 1978. Survivors: Lillian (Martens) Wenzel; daughter: Miriam Burrell. Funeral: May 10, 2008, Rugby, N.D.; interment: May 10, 2008, Ruthville, N.D.

**WILLIAMS, EDWARD R.;** June 14, 1918, Swartzwood, N.J., to April 8, 2008, Wyandotte, Mich.; son of Rev. Edward and Lorena (Kropp) Williams; colloquy 1948. Served 1949–1983. Ministries/parishes: Filmore, N.Y.; Punxsutawney, Du Bois, Pa.; Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; retired 1983. Survivors: Rena (Christie) Williams; son: Lewis; daughters: Elizabeth, Carolyn. Funeral: April 12, 2008, Dearborn, Mich.; cremation.

### COMMISSIONED

**DIETRICH, BRIAN R.;** Feb. 15, 1943, St. Louis, Mo., to April 24, 2008, Simi Valley, Calif.; son of Roy and Helen Dietrich; graduated Seward, 1965. Served 1965–2005. Schools/ministries: Tampa, Hollywood, Fla.; Simi Valley, Calif.; retired 2005. Survivors: Ruth (Kieffer) Dietrich; sons: Joel, Trevor; daughter: Heidi de la Motte. Memorial service: May 3, 2008, Simi Valley, Calif.

**DOBBERFUHL-DOBBERT, ALMA M. (MULLER);** May 12, 1922, Marion County, Ore., to Feb. 18, 2008, Janesville, Wis.; daughter of Ernest and Dorothy (Engel) Muller; graduated River Forest, 1943. Served 1973–1987. School/ministry: Portland, Ore.; retired 1993. Preceded in death by her husband, Reinhold Dobberfuhl, and her son, Bill Dobberfuhl. Survivors: Alan Dobbert; step-sons: Donald, Robert, Kenneth; step-daughter: Linda Delvis. Memorial service: Feb. 22, 2008, Janesville, Wis.; interment: Portland, Ore.

**DUBE, BEVERLY JANICE (ARMSTRONG);** Aug. 9, 1946, Port Arthur, Texas, to June 22, 2008, Austin, Texas; daughter of Raymond and Mildred (Higgins) Armstrong; graduated Seward, 1968. Served 1973–1980, 1983–2006. Schools/ministries: Austin, Houston, Spring, Texas; retired 2006. Survivors: sons: Nathan, Cameron. Funeral: June 24, 2008, Austin, Texas; interment: June 24, 2008, Sattler, Texas.

**GARMATZ, ROBERT W.;** Jan. 8, 1921, Verdi, Minn., to June 8, 2008, St. Louis, Mo.; son of John and Elizabeth (De Vries) Garmatz; graduated Seward, 1941. Served 1943–1987. Schools/ministries: Detroit, Mich.; St. Louis, Mo.; Seward, Neb.; Denver, Colo.; San Diego, Calif.; Concordia Publishing House; Lutheran Laymen's League; retired 1987. Preceded in death by his wife, Florence (Gruber) Garmatz. Survivors: Margaret (Born) Garmatz; son: John; daughters: Ellen Bushre, Susan Jordan. Funeral: June 12, 2008, Kirkwood, Mo.; body donated to science.

# First Day of School

by Terence Groth

Early every fall a milestone event takes place all across America: Mothers send their children off to the first day of school. For some pupils this is a partial day in preschool or kindergarten. For others, it is a full day as a first-grader. For still others, it is the first day of life as a young adult, beginning college many miles from home.

This event can be traumatic, and it is always a faith venture for both parent and child. The story of Hannah and Samuel from the Old Testament reminds us that in this activity God is at work, caring for His children and accomplishing His good purposes.

Parents and children can be encouraged that God has been acting in their lives to bring His blessings long before the first day of school. For what did Hannah pray, and how did God answer her prayer? Read 1 Sam. 1:11, 20.

As difficult as it must have been, Hannah kept her promise and dedicated her young son to God to be His life-long servant. She commended Samuel into the care of the priest Eli at the tabernacle. But first, Hannah had three or more years during which she nursed Samuel at home, and introduced him to his God. Hannah's prayer on the day of her dedication of Samuel at the tabernacle shows her to be a mother of deep faith and well-formulated theology. What does her prayer (1 Sam. 2:1-10) express about the following topics?

God (vv. 2, 3b):

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Creation (v. 8c):

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Providence (vv. 8a, b, 9):

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Death and resurrection (v. 6):

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Judgment (v. 10b):

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Messiah/anointed (v. 10c):

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Through Hannah's nurturing of Samuel and his training with Eli, God worked a growing faith-life in young Samuel. How is that expressed in the following passages?

1 Sam. 1:28:

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1 Sam. 2:26:

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1 Sam. 3:19-21:

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Samuel grew into the leader and prophet whom God used powerfully to rescue Israel from her enemies (1 Sam. 7:2-17) and to select and anoint Israel's first kings, Saul (1 Sam. 10:20-25) and David (1 Sam. 16:1-13). The latter became the ancestor whose descendant, Jesus of Nazareth, was the ultimate fulfillment of Hannah's prayer. In fact, Jesus' mother may well have modeled her prayer of praise for her son after Hannah's (cf. Luke 1:46-55).

Like Samuel, Jesus "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52 NIV). Like Samuel, Jesus rescued God's people from their enemies—this time, the ultimate enemies of death and the devil (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8). But far greater than those Samuel anointed as kings, Jesus was anointed by His Father to rule over heaven and earth. He rules eternally over all who trust in the forgiveness He won as He reigned from the cross (Col. 1:15-20).

What a mighty chain of saving events God set in motion as He moved Hannah to bring her little son for his first of many days in God's school! What blessings will God work through all the Samuels whose mothers bring them for their first day of school this year? The school bell calls us to prayer and joyful expectation!

**Rev. Terence Groth is an assistant professor of theology at Concordia University Nebraska.**





## Just a Layman?

When I am “out and about” and meet someone new, it is not unusual for that person to tell me his or her name and then say, “I’m just a layman (or a laywoman).” When I hear those words, I reply with an affirmation of that person as a redeemed child of God, a faithful member of a congregation, and a man or woman called by God to a life of service in his or her chosen vocation.

As I think about the calling of God in our lives and see the involvement of Lutheran people in so many facets of Christian service, I am ever thankful to be a member of the Christian church, and specifically of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This sort of involvement is apparent throughout this edition of *The Lutheran Witness*. In the articles about Hurricane Katrina, the Midwest floods, and “Mission Central” in Iowa, we see stories of God’s people active in mission and ministry.

Consider, for example, the article that revisits the horrific hurricane of 2005 whose name has become a household word, *Katrina*. Because of the care and concern shown by people of the LCMS who helped their Gulf Coast neighbors so severely afflicted by Katrina, these years since the hurricane may well go down in the annals of history as one of our Synod’s “finest moments.”

Thousands and thousands of our people—the number is not fully known—contributed thousands and thousands of hours and millions of dollars to help people along the Gulf Coast rebuild their lives and restore their property.

Those who have labored thus far in the hurricane’s wake know that many opportunities developed for them to give witness to “the hope that is within us,” namely, Christ as the incarnation of God’s love for humanity. So much physical labor and caring at the hands of strangers captured the attention of those receiving the help. Then they learned that these strangers—that’s you and I—were motivated to be there by the love of Christ.

It is because God first loved us and sent Christ into the world to earn for us the forgiveness of our sin and the free gift of eternal life that so many were moved to get off their couches and away from their TVs to find ways to ease the burdens of others.

We see this happening also in the aftermath of the flooding that devastated so many places in the Midwest this year. Indeed, other natural disasters and catastrophes—earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis, tornados—also are regular stories in the news these days. These wreak havoc and destruction in our land and across the face of the globe, wrecking homes and devastating lives.

Serving God and others with our gifts of knowledge, wisdom, time, and financial resources is a very important part of our Christian calling. The worldwide need for us to use our gifts in this way is huge. As Christians, we respond as God enables us by His grace and with His gifts.

*Just a layman?* A layman to be sure. But you are so much more. You are a baptized child of God, seeking to do what you can with the gifts God has given you.

Serving God and others with our gifts of knowledge, wisdom, time, and financial resources is a very important part of our Christian calling.

**Jerry Kieschnick**  
John 3:16–17

Lives Transformed through  
Christ, in Time . . . for Eternity!  
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