

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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REDEEMED
OUT OF EGYPT





THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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A HIDING PLACE OF PEACE

BY ELIZABETH NEUFELD

Saint Augustine said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”

Might I be vulnerable for a moment? I have been so restless. I had not retreated to our Sovereign God in the way that I should have. It became clear to me because my attitude toward the Lord had changed, and that was alarming. Our friend Saint Augustine pointed out that God-sized hole in my heart, and the Lord reminded me through this quote that it was time to be restful in the presence of the Lord again instead of seeking solace in the world.

Our bodies were made for worship. Shouldn't my focus be on lifting high His Name in all I do? Our hearts were made for Him. Ought not my spirit be carried away by His love? My heart has been dedicated to far more things than just my Father.

I have been restless. It is easy to think it is more restful to numb my mind and not pick up my Bible. Too many days I have chosen not to open the Word because I'm not willing to do the work of comprehending and being humbled. Indeed, finding rest in Him often requires the hard work of conviction that humbles us in His presence. To be truly restful is dwelling “in the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1). He is our “refuge and fortress” (vs 2), and we can trust Him. He is our hiding place, our security in the midst of a chaotic world. But that hiding place is humbling. The secure shelter is the essence

of worship, where we are trusting God alone to fulfill our needs instead of thinking the world has enough for us. We will not be restful until we are in His will—trusting His provision and timing—where we have bowed our hearts and bent our knees, the ultimate posture and attitude as His image-bearers.

My nature goes against bowing to God alone. For example, in an emotionally taxing moment the last thing I've wanted to do is humble myself before the Lord. But in fact, I've realized once more that it ought to be the very first thing I do. Far faster will my heart be renewed. Far less likely would my heart be restored by choosing a TV show or social media. In fact, the heart becomes a little more hardened every time we choose against the Word and for the world. A rut in the pathways of our minds forms a little more deeply.

I thank the Holy Spirit every day that He continues to nudge me toward Himself despite the deeply worn, stubborn habits I've formed. The more often the route to your dusty Bible and your weary knees is made, the sweeter it becomes to return to that precious retreat. Be restless no longer. Instead, be humbled in the sight of the Lord, and find the ultimate restoration in your Creator.

Neufeld is a Home Missions parish builder serving at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.

If the Cross will not waken love and wonder in men's hearts, nothing will.

—William Barclay

To live in the light of resurrection—that is what Easter means.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Lent would indeed be a futile liturgical farce if the redeemed were henceforth sinless and if the tides of human nature were not always moving even the twice-born, who have not shed their human nature, in the direction of complacency and taking it all for granted.

—Edna Hong

There are secrets that only God knows, and the crucifixion at Golgotha is perhaps the greatest of them all.

—J. Heinrich Arnold

Something perfectly new in the history of the Universe had happened. Christ had defeated death. The door which had always been locked had for the very first time been forced open.

—C.S. Lewis

Firstborn

BY RACHEL MOLSTRE

Kids always want to be first. The first to blow out the candles, the first to dish up ice cream, the first to pick a seat in the car. When I was growing up, we often chose who was first based on birth order. “Youngest first” one day and “oldest first” the next. Fair, right? But when you’re a middle child, like me, you quickly realize that this system has a fatal flaw: the middle child is never first. So, as a middle child, I doubly appreciate God’s disregard for birth order and other human expectations when choosing His assembly of the first born (Hebrews 12:23).

In the early Old Testament cultures, the first born male child inherited extra rights and privileges not given to younger siblings. Why? Because procreation was a big deal to these cultures, so the first evidence of a man’s virility and a woman’s fertility was a thing to be celebrated and rewarded. Yet, faced with this cultural expectation of a privileged first born, what do we see God doing? We see Him choose Isaac over Ishmael to inherit His covenant with Abraham. We see Him choose Jacob, the younger son, over Esau. Judah? He had several brothers ahead of him in the birth order, yet he was chosen. We see God’s sovereignty, His divine right to choose, without regard to mankind’s cultural bias towards birth order.

In the first Passover in Exodus 12, we again see God’s divine choice. In the plagues, God clearly draws a line

between the nation of Egypt and the nation of Israel, culminating in the tenth plague: the death of the first born and the institution of Passover. God has chosen Israel for His own, a first born son among the nations: “Thus says the Lord, Israel is my first born son, and I say to you, ‘Let my son go that he may serve me.’ If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your first born son” (Exodus 4:22-23). And later, in chapter 6, God says, “I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.” Did you note the emphasis on God’s sovereignty and His choice? “Let my son go that he may serve me.” “I will take you to be my people,” “you shall know that *I am the Lord your God*,” and, “I am the Lord.”

Yet, as the years rolled by, the nation of Israel forgot the significance of God’s choice. They forgot that their sonship, their status as God’s heirs, did not rely on their lineage or ability to keep the law. In Matthew 3, John the Baptist declares to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able





GOD'S DIVINE CHOICE

from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.”

Once again, God upends the expectations of man. It is not those who call Abraham their biological forefather who inherit the rights and privileges of the first born. It is God's choice. “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first born among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30).

What does all this mean for us? It means that our sonship, our status as first born heirs with Christ, is not dependent on birth order. It is not dependent on our lineage or ethnicity, whether we are Jew or Gentile. It is not even dependent on our good works. God has chosen you to receive a place in His family and a share in Christ's inheritance. So this Lenten season, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, but “see to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness” (Hebrews 3:12).

Molstre is the librarian at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, Plymouth, Minn. “Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple,” Pietro Antonio de' Pietri, 1663–1716.

ATONEMENT FOR LIFE

Blood

BY JOEL ERICKSON

The story of the Passover has many intriguing aspects to it. No doubt many of us have stopped to consider questions such as, “Why blood?” or, “Why would you spread blood over the doorposts of a dwelling?”

To grasp the symbolism here, we need to understand some details of the Old Testament sacrificial system prescribed by God himself for the ancient Israelites. Turning to Hebrews 9:6-8, we read, “When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered into the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning.”

The writer to the Hebrews wants us to notice some extremely important details here. Various priests performed temple service daily in the outer courts of the tabernacle. But only one priest, the High Priest, was authorized by God to enter the inner court, or Most Holy Place. The High Priest offered sacrifices for himself and for the rest of the Israelites. Notice further that the High Priest entered into the Most Holy Place only once a year and never without blood. So, blood was, and always has been, a central theme in seeking the remission of sins.

Why was blood so important to the transaction involving the remission of sins? For that answer, we can turn to Leviticus 17:11, where we read the following, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.”

God is instructing the Israelites on the extremely high cost of paying for, or atoning for, sin. This is

serious business in the eyes of Almighty God. Romans 6:23 tells us that “the wages of sin is death.” Since the fall into sin by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden recorded in Genesis 3, death is the sentence pronounced on every single one of us. God taught the Israelites that atonement for sin would require a life and the spilling of blood.

At the end of Hebrews 9, in verse 22, the writer explains, “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleaned with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

Whose blood is required? In Exodus 12, we learn that the animals used as sacrifices to provide the blood to spread on the doorposts must be year-old males, either sheep or goats, but without defect. It was not sufficient to take the oldest or weakest or most frail animal from the flock or herd. It had to be an animal as close to perfect (i.e., without blemish) as the Israelite could find among his flock or herd. The lesson here is that the question of whose blood would suffice was an extremely important one. I think you can safely conclude that the chosen sheep or goat would have to be among the most valuable animals in the flock or herd. Costly? Absolutely.

Further, we can also learn from Hebrews 9:13, “The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.” The blood of animals was required under the old covenant, but it was recognized that animal’s blood provided only a temporary covering for sin. Full remission for sin would not come until Christ—the chosen Lamb of God—“entered the Most Holy





Place once for all by His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption for sin” (Hebrews 9:12b.)

The Israelites, by faith on the night of the Passover, had to act on God’s command to take blood and spread it across the doorposts of their dwellings. The blood was to serve as a covering for their sins. When the angel of death came over Egypt to kill the first born males of all human beings and animals, the blood on the doorposts signified that the sins of those living in the dwellings so covered were under the blood of a temporary sacrifice which protected those Israelite families and their animals from losing their first born males to the plague of death in Egypt.

What a testimony this Passover event should be to every Christian. Man has sinned grievously, but “because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy”

(Ephesians 2:4) provided a sacrifice (in the form of sheep or goats) to form a covering to protect the Israelites from the angel of death. God kept His promise under the old covenant to the Israelites living in Egypt. God also later kept His promise of providing a Savior under the new covenant who offers eternal redemption to those who truly acknowledge their sins, repent of their sins, and believe the promise of forgiveness of those sins through the life, death, burial and resurrection of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—the best story a lost and wandering soul can ever hear.

Erickson is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn. “Aaron Blesses the Sacrificial Cattle,” etching, by Jan Luyken, 1703.

BE READY TO GO



Unleavened Bread

BY PEGGY BERGLUND

Warnings of an approaching hurricane send many in its path scurrying to board up their windows, join long lines at gas stations, and rush to grocery stores. Those who must decide when they will evacuate and where they will go. Those living in hurricane-plagued areas are acquainted with the warnings to be ready to go. Not so for Israel. The Israelites spent 430 years at the same address without the freedom to leave for any reason. Leaving Egypt was their dream, one they saw no possibility of realizing until the plagues began.

The Israelites were spared the nine plagues the Egyptians experienced, and they received instructions for escaping the devastation of the tenth: the death of the firstborn in every Egyptian home. The homes of the Israelites were protected by the blood of the lamb they had prepared for their evening meal. The blood was to be painted over the doorway of their home—a protection from the tenth plague. Further instructions for that first Passover meal included a “recipe” for their bread. It was to be unleavened bread, containing no yeast.

Bread was a mainstay in their diets. Great care was given in making the bread, from the pounding of the wheat into flour to preserving a small portion of dough which would become the starter—leaven or yeast—for the next batch. This time it was different. They were to make bread without leaven so they could leave when given notice. Any leaven left from prior baking was to be thrown out. Their homes were to be totally free of any leaven. Noncompliance would result in being cut off from the community of Israel.

Their meal on that night of Passover was to be eaten quickly, and they were to be dressed for travel—sandals on their feet, staff in hand, and ready to go. When each family heard the order to leave, their large mixing bowl of bread dough was securely wrapped in a piece of clothing and hoisted to a waiting shoulder as they left their homes in haste. They had no way of knowing that what they were carrying foreshadowed the Bread of Life—the sinless One. And again, in their wanderings in the wilderness, the manna the Israelites found daily on the ground was pointing toward Jesus, the Bread of Life.

It takes a little less than two teaspoons of yeast to leaven six cups of flour when making bread. That’s two teaspoons of yeast and 288 teaspoons of flour, but what a difference two little teaspoons make. Leaven, or yeast, starts so small but eventually affects the whole batch. One of Jesus’s shortest parables talks of yeast and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 13:33 says, “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about 60 pounds of flour until it worked through all the dough.” This follows the parable of the mustard seed, both reflecting the theme of the Kingdom of Heaven and describing its amazing growth.

The effect of sin in an individual’s life, the life of a congregation, or the world is also compared to the multiplying work of yeast. Galatians 5:6-7 makes that comparison: “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” I Corinthians 5:6-7 also supports that likeness, “Don’t you know that a little yeast permeates the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, since you are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us observe the feast, not with old yeast, or with the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

The people of Israel had been in bondage for more than 400 years. Their freedom had finally come. The blood of a spotless lamb on their door posts spared them, the unleavened bread sustained them. Little did they know that through the centuries as they obediently celebrated the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they were slowly unwrapping the mystery of the Messiah. Their rescue from the bondage of Egypt was magnified in the provision made for us by the Spotless Lamb of God and the Bread of Life who frees us from the bondage of sin and is coming again to take us to be with Him. We must be ready to go.

Because of the promise of freedom from bondage, the Israelites were ready, waiting for the command to go. Their homes were swept clean of all leaven, they were dressed for travel and they had the bowl of unleavened bread dough that would satisfy their hunger, wrapped, ready to carry with them.

We can look back on their freedom from bondage and see what they were not able to see, how the plan had begun for them to enter the land promised to them. The plan began with instruction to be ready. The plan has continued down through the centuries and now embraces us. Instruction is given to us in Matthew 24:44, “Therefore you must be ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Berglund is a member of Amery Free Lutheran, Amery, Wis. “Het Pascha (The Passover),” pen, by Jan Luyken, 1660-1712.

"The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, 'This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight'" (Exodus 12:1-6).

Exodus 12 is a record of the last of the ten plagues that God sent on Egypt. The last plague was the death of all the firstborn in Egypt. In this chapter God also graciously provided explanation of the way that the people of Israel could be spared from the death of their firstborn children. This God-appointed means of grace would be through a lamb, without spot or blemish. God was very specific in His instructions, and we want to examine briefly its meaning and significance for the people in this context, and also how this relates to Christ and us.

First, notice the details recorded for the selection of a lamb. The lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of the first month according to the size of one's household. If the household was too small for a lamb, then they should share it with their nearest neighbor, according to what each person would eat. The lamb had to be "without blemish, a male a year old." We see in this description that first the lamb had to be without defects. This was God's standard for all animals that would be sacrificed for sinful people (see Leviticus 1:3, and 22:17-25). Freedom from blemish and injury were fitting for the sacredness of the purpose to which they were used. The lamb was also to be a year old as it was not until then that the animal had reached its full vigor of life. This lamb selected on the tenth day was to be kept until the fourteenth day by each household. After a few days of beginning to bond with this lamb, every family was to kill their lamb at twilight. It was also to be a male lamb, taking the place of the firstborn male of Israel whose lives would be spared by the blood of the lamb.

Notice secondly, the truth of the substitutionary sacrifice. This lamb was to be killed for each household, and its blood put on the doorposts and lintel so that the death angel would pass over that household and not slay the firstborn. Either the lamb would die, or the firstborn son would die. God's mercy and grace was experienced through the blood of the lamb. The lamb was also to be roasted and eaten by all in the household. God provided this food for the strengthening of His people. God called

His people to trust Him and take Him at His Word, and those who did experienced His life-saving grace.

This gracious provision of God to provide a means of grace for His people through the blood of an unblemished lamb is a type or foreshadowing of what He would do through His Son, Jesus Christ, the one John the Baptist called the Lamb of God: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Fast forward three years or so after John's declaration. Thousands of Israelites were traveling to Jerusalem from all over the region to celebrate the Passover feast. Jesus, too, was on the way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover for the last time. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem days before His death is recorded in all four Gospels. As the people were throwing their garments on the road and waving palm branches in the air, they shouted, "Hosanna!" which means, "save us now." They used the language of Psalm 118:25-26a, "Save us, we pray, O Lord! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" It's no coincidence that Psalm 118, among the Hallel Psalms, was part of the liturgy used by the Jews during Passover, but now people were seeing its fulfillment before their very eyes. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, rode into Jerusalem on Sunday, the tenth day of the month, at the same time the Jews were selecting the Passover lamb for themselves. Jesus, the sinless, spotless Passover Lamb of God, just days later would give His life and shed his blood for the sins of the world.

Peter declared, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:18-19, NIV). Praise be to God for this Lamb without spot or blemish, who is our Savior.

Rolf, Andover, Minn., is a member of Minnewaska Lutheran, Starbuck, Minn. "Lamb of God on the Book with Seven Seals," engraving, Pietro Paolo Tozzi, 1601-1627.

Passover Lamb

BY MARY-ANN ROLF



WITHOUT SPOT OR BLEMISH

Red Sea

BY PASTOR DAVID JORE

One of the ways my wife and I used to help our four small children pass the time during a long road trip was by singing songs. We would ask each of them to select a song for the family to sing starting with our oldest child and ending with the youngest, then we would repeat the cycle. Judith and I would also take our turn choosing a song.

From time to time I would select a Scripture song from the book of Exodus. The lyrics, taken from 14:13-14, are: "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. (Repeat) The Lord will fight for you; the Lord will fight for you. Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." As I recall, I would usually tap my hand on the dashboard to help give a good rhythm to this robust song of praise.

The verses of this Scripture song were spoken by Moses to the people of Israel right in the middle of their dramatic exodus from Egypt. They and their ancestors had been in Egypt for more than 400 years, living in bondage as slaves for a good portion of the time. When the Lord delivered His people from the Egyptians, instead of leading His people around the Red Sea, He brought them right up to the edge of it. To make this even more of a crisis, the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and he came after them with a large army. When the people cried out in fear, Moses told them, "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord will fight for you ..."

The Lord did fight for them in an amazing way. He instructed Moses to stretch out his staff all night, and the waters parted. All of the people of Israel walked through the sea on dry land. Moses stretched out his staff once again over the sea and it returned to its normal course. As a result, Pharaoh's entire army, having pursued them into the sea, was drowned.



A PICTURE OF SALVATION



The crossing of the Red Sea is a picture of salvation, pointing ahead to the coming of Christ. Within this picture we can see seven metaphors that compare the Red Sea crossing to the coming Savior.

First, the crossing is a picture of redemption. The first Passover lambs were slain, and the people of Israel were set free from slavery in Egypt. In Christ we have not only been forgiven but set free from our sins by the blood of Jesus. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses ..." writes Paul to the Ephesians (1:7).

It is also a picture of mercy and grace. Only by an awesome miracle of God were the people of Israel able to pass through the waters of the Red Sea on dry land. The apostle John wrote, "For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

Quite dramatically, the crossing of the sea is a picture of baptism. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul likens passing through the Red Sea to baptism. He wrote to the believers in Rome, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Crossing through the waters of the Red Sea is also a picture of the obedience of faith. The people of Israel were able to pass through the sea because of God's miraculous intervention, but they still had to walk that path, with walls of powerful water on either side of them. It was a faith walk. "By faith the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry land," explained the writer of Hebrews (11:29).

It is a picture of Satan's defeat. Pharaoh, who is a "type" of Satan, was defeated in a two-fold way. God's judgments through the ten plagues not only devastated Egypt, but Pharaoh's entire army was drowned in the Red Sea. Likewise, Jesus has not only defeated Satan by the shedding of His blood on the cross, but He has also enabled His church to overcome Satan. John prophetically wrote, "And they have conquered him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death" (Revelation 12:11).

We see also that going through from one side to the other is a picture of new life and freedom in Christ. The people of Israel were released from slavery and given a new start after they crossed the Red Sea. As Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

Ultimately, the successful passage through the sea is a picture of the joy of our salvation. On the other side of the Red Sea there was great rejoicing. Both Moses and Miriam led the Israelites in songs of worship, saying, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2).

The crossing of the Red Sea is a powerful picture of our salvation in Christ. As we reflect on this truth during this Lenten season, may we enter more fully into the joy of our salvation!

Jore serves Maple Bay Free Lutheran, Mentor, Minn.

"Moses Commanding the Waters of the Red Sea to Separate," study in pencil, pen, and ink on paper, by William Page, 1855.

THE NEW COVENANT





Four Cups

BY PASTOR NICK DYRUD

Last year on a trip in Israel with fellow AFLC pastors, we got to walk into the dungeon where scholars believe Jesus was lowered as He spent the night imprisoned before His trial. From the reputed House of Caiaphas where Jesus was tried before the Sanhedrin, we could see the Temple Mount and the beautiful Mount of Olives. We could picture the walk Jesus was led on after His arrest as well as His journey to the cross. I'm so grateful to have stood in those places and experienced that setting. It has brought to life the truth of God's Word and the significance of God's grace in a very personal and contextual way.

The Lenten season brings to mind so many vivid pictures of Christ's suffering, trial, death, and resurrection. As Easter Sunday fast approaches, I've spent a good deal of time poring over the Gospel of John and his account of the Passover celebration in Israel. The events leading up to the resurrection have obvious correlations to the fulfillment of the prophecies and promises of the coming Messiah.

Still to this day, the Festival of Passover is the biggest and the most important of all of the feasts, celebrating the redemption of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. During Passover, people remember how God led the Israelites out of the hand of Pharaoh and would bring upon their captors a final plague of judgment. The angel of death would inflict a final blow on the firstborn son of each family that did not have the shed blood of a lamb upon the doorpost of their home. That night even Pharaoh lost his son. The horror and agony caused him to finally pronounce the banishment of his enslaved workforce. He would, at least for the moment, let the people of Israel go.

Salvation followed as the Israelites later crossed the sea and left Pharaoh and his army in its wake. Redemption is a central theme of the Passover. Even today, Jewish families remembering the Exodus lift the Cup of Redemption to remember God's provision. Although we do not know all of the details as to how this tradition came about, we do know that Jesus lifted the cup twice during the last supper with His disciples and proclaimed that the cup was the New Covenant, His blood which was shed for the salvation of our souls.

There are four cups in the Seder meal. The Mishnah instructs those celebrating to drink from the cup four times as they celebrate the cup of sanctification, the cup of the plagues, the cup of redemption or blessing, and the cup of praise. Each cup is filled with wine, a picture of the blood of the lamb slain for the salvation of Israel. As families gather around the table for the traditional Jewish Seder customs, they remember, reflect, and equally participate in the redemption story.

The first cup of sanctification (*Kiddush*, in Hebrew) remembers that Israel was set apart by God. Without Jesus we cannot obtain salvation or righteousness. Because

SEE PAGE 16

PARTICIPATING IN THE REDEMPTION STORY

FROM PAGE 15

He went to the cross and died for our sins, like the sacrificial lamb, so Jesus is our one and only sacrifice. He fulfilled what we could not fulfill. He is our righteousness. He is what sets us apart from the rest of the world for God and His purposes. He is the promise that we will be taken out of our enslavement and brought back to the promise and land, into relationship with God. In John 17:19 Jesus prayed to the Father, "For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth." What a beautiful prayer. He gave His life for us so that we could know the truth and that the truth could set us free.

The second cup of plagues (*Maggid*) remembers God's judgment and wrath. This cup gives us both a picture of God's vengeance and His protection from the plagues over Israel. Jesus, who knew no sin, took upon Himself all evil in order that we could walk into freedom from the slavery of our sin. Because of His redemption, by His grace we have power over the enemy. The power of His Spirit is within us to overcome temptation, fear, and oppression. Jesus is our vengeance. He is our strength. Without Him there is no hope in our own power and strength. He is our only hope of salvation for we cannot conquer the evil one who oppresses us. "He will save us" is the theme of this cup, which brings to mind Revelation 7:10-11, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" The Lamb is Jesus.

The third cup of blessing (*Birkat Hamazon*) remembers God's redemption or rescue as the sea parted and the Israelites crossed on dry land. God had successfully bought His people back by the blood

of the lamb upon the doorposts. Israel was now free from the bondage of slavery. I Corinthians 10:1-4 provides a clear recounting of this story: "Our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."

What an amazing truth. I can look back upon this account and see the fulfillment of each promise God has given me, and I can live in each promise today. Likewise, we are reminded in I Corinthians 10:16, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?" Because of Jesus we can live in His redemptive work. We can live in the greater redemption through His sanctification, protection, blessing, and also His joy.

The fourth cup of praise (*Hallel*) remembers Israel coming to Mount Sinai and becoming a nation. God led them out of Egypt. He provided for them through the desert and would now give them the law at Sinai. Despite Israel's complaining and rebellion, God's mercy was still upon them. We don't deserve God's blessing, and we certainly do not earn it, but God is still gracious in salvation. The joy of redemption, the protection and

restoration of God, by His grace, should cause us to praise the One who gave His life for us.

Let us take part ourselves this Lenten season as we remember Jesus as the Passover Lamb. May we live in His true joy and experience this blessing as we gather together to worship the one who came to give His life in order that we might have life abundantly. I pray that we take this to heart. It was Jesus who said to us in John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Each cup is a fulfillment of the promise of God to His people through Him. As the blood of the Passover Lamb covered the believing Israelites in Egypt, so does the Messiah's blood cover both Jewish and Gentile believers today.

Dyrud serves Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn. "Christ and the Apostles During the Last Supper," gravure, by Abraham de Blois, 1728.



"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20).



GO WHERE HE LEADS

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

In 1978 a lady in India who had a strong faith in Jesus decided to move to a fishing village named Elachetladibba. The village was rather isolated and had no Christian witness. She didn't go there because she was asked to or because it was comfortable or near friends and family. She chose to go to that village because the people there needed somebody to tell them about Jesus.

She shared the good news of how God loves us and sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins and rise again from the dead. She prayed and she kept being faithful. Finally, some people started to respond and come to faith in the Lord. Eventually a congregation began that continues on to this day. AFLC World Missions Director Earl Korhonen and I had the privilege of visiting that congregation this past January and worshiping with them.

From the city of Chirala it is about a three-hour drive and a 40-minute boat ride to Elachetladibba. The isolation makes having a good infrastructure and sufficient fresh water supply a challenge.

It keeps getting harder for the people there to make a living by fishing. Some of them told us about there being less fish, more restrictions, and higher prices for equipment. Fishing, though, is all that a lot of those people know, and it is hard for them to go elsewhere and do something different.

In Indian society, being a fisherman isn't considered a highly respected or important profession. My father was a commercial fisherman in the U.S., so I told the people in the village, in a way, I was part of their group. Far more importantly, Jesus chose ones of our group to be some of His first disciples. Jesus went to where the fishermen were and chose them.

"As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' ... When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them" (Mark 1:16-20). Then and now, the Lord calls ones who may not be among society's wealthiest or most influential to be His followers.



The Indian woman of faith chose to go to a village that was not easy to get to and was not inhabited by people society valued. That is just the kind of thing Jesus does, and the kind of people and places He calls us to go to. We are called to go to those places to which it might take a journey to reach, and to be far from family and friends. In those places there are people who need to hear about Jesus. "And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (Romans 10:14).

No matter where the village might be or what profession the people practice, we give thanks we can know Jesus loves them and wants them to hear the good news of His great salvation.

Johnson, who serves Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore., is the chairman of the AFLC World Missions Committee.

Congregations respond to COVID-19 protocols

How do you worship corporately when such gatherings could spread a disease to the most vulnerable? And when people are in need, how can you be the hands and feet of Christ when you have to keep at least six feet away from your closest neighbor? These are the types of questions our congregations and ministries are struggling to answer as communities, states, and nations have begun to close down in an effort to stop COVID-19, a deadly coronavirus spreading worldwide.

AFLC congregations have begun following protocols recommended by state governors and federal health officials. On March 15, many congregations, including Living Word Lutheran and Abiding Savior

presumptuous to continue as we were and disregard this request,” said Giles. “We are canceling everything until the end of March.”

It’s a tough decision to make when so many depend on their local congregation for spiritual care and direction, as well as the many programs which meet the physical needs of their local communities. For now, Calvary Free Lutheran will continue to provide the Saturday Food Pantry which serves thousands in their community, although with some changes: besides the usual gloves worn by volunteers, they will now also don facemasks.

“Since many businesses are closing, jobs are being canceled and many don’t get paid if they don’t work, so the need for this help is even greater than before,” said Giles.

Congregations and ministries are now grappling with the dilemma of how to honor the Lord’s Day while still respecting the rule of law. How do pastors and congregations offer spiritual help and care from afar? The answers our pastors are giving continue to come from God’s Word.

“Our role as a church does not change,” said Pastor Chad Friestad, who serves

Good Shepherd in Camarillo. “We proclaim God’s Word through whatever means we can, we care for God’s people, we extend Christ’s love to our neighbors, and allow our love for one another to be a testimony to the world that we are disciples of Jesus.”

Pastor Jesse Kneeland, who serves Living Hope in Rogers, Minn., looked to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5, in which He called believers to be the salt and light in the world. “The church is not a building. The church is not the pastor. The church is not the worship team or the pianist. The church is the people and it is people who are His light in the darkness,” he said.

It is just such a time for which the church is uniquely prepared. “As the Body of Christ we are here to serve in Jesus’ name,” said Pastor Giles. “People need to see that we love them and are here for them

now more than ever. People are scared and lonely and don’t know where to turn.”

This is the crux of the church’s ministry going forward, said Pastor Kirk Flaa, who serves Abiding Savior in Sioux Falls, “My prayer is that we do not waste the crisis. This is by no means intended as a statement directed at serving self, or building up one’s own kingdom, but it is an appeal that as a church we get out and participate as part of the solution.”

To be a part of the solution, though, could mean foregoing corporate worship for an extended period of time, including through the Easter season. Flaa noted that as the church is an integral part of local communities, it is the role of the church to not only obey governing authorities, but to see its obedience as an opportunity to be a part of the solution.

“Obviously, there is a definite financial impact, the risk of isolation on the part of our members, and the risk of losing track of families, but these concerns pale in the opportunity we have at just this very moment to slow the spread of this virus,” he said.

In that light, AFLC congregations are moving forward with the same mission to serve Christ and to serve their neighbors—but they are finding unique ways to accomplish that mission. Members of Christ the King Free Lutheran in East Grand Forks, Minn., have already begun offering free lunches in the church parking lot to children 18 and younger during weekdays. The children of Newark Lutheran’s Sunday school, Newark, Ill., have donated their offerings to Kendall County Community Food Pantry. And members of St. Olaf Lutheran, Montgomery, Ill., have begun organizing teams to shop for and delivery groceries for those in need.

Likely, congregations will continue to find new ways to serve their communities as opportunities arise. As they do, Pastor Flaa senses that the church’s reaction could shape the scope of ministry beyond the current crisis.

“I believe that how we navigate in these uncharted waters may very well define what we become in the future,” he said. “My heart always is that God finds faithful.”

—By Ruth Gunderson



Lutheran, both in Sioux Falls, S.D., and Good Shepherd Lutheran in Camarillo, Calif., voluntarily closed their church doors, offering online services via Facebook Live or web services such as YouTube or Vimeo. Others, like Living Hope in Rogers, Minn., Our Redeemer Lutheran in Kirkland, Wash., and Calvary Lutheran in Mesa, Ariz., held corporate worship together, while offering online services to those who wished to stay home. Still others continued with events as normal.

But as the new week began, even those events were cancelled as President Donald Trump asked Americans to forego meeting together in groups of 10 or more.

Pastor Dan Giles, who serves Calvary Lutheran in Mesa, relayed the ever-changing schedule after meeting with church leaders. “We felt that it would be



WMF

WOMEN'S
MISSIONARY
FEDERATION

T

he national
Women's
Missionary
Federation
requested

information from the ladies in our churches this past year. One request was to share some activities that your church is doing as a WMF/women's ministry. Below is a summary of your responses.

Some WMF projects, other than those focused on raising funds for missions, included sewing groups which make quilts to send to the mission fields and birthday cards to send to our AFLC missionaries and their families. Some groups send monetary gifts to seminary students, interns, and college students to help them out financially while studying at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary.

WMF groups serve at funerals, showers, potluck meals, and other church gatherings. They help to support their local church in various

ways by supplying the kitchen and helping with improvements, and visiting shut-ins. Some groups make and serve desserts, hold craft bazaars, or host other fund-raisers supporting various activities and projects. They make meals for those who have been ill or are in need of assistance, make prayer shawls, help students go to Bible camp, and fund updates for local parsonages. Women gather for fellowship during crafting weekends and retreats.

Ideas to reach out to local communities included honoring women and their spouses, sending meat and cheese trays to the local schoolteachers, supporting local school drives, donating money, time, and service in the community at homeless shelters, senior and youth centers, and providing for needy families. Quilting groups make quilts for local ministries. Those who crochet or knit make hats for

newborns or hats and mittens for those in need. Nursing home ministry is done as well through providing services, birthday celebrations, or special events for residents, providing lap quilts, and just spending time with the residents.

Many ideas were shared. This is not to say that each group should be doing all of these services, but we wanted to offer our local groups possible ideas to consider incorporating into each ministry. Some of your WMF groups are small. There is nothing wrong with being small. Look beyond your size and embrace what you do well—and do it. One group can't and doesn't have to do all these things. Each group must determine what God wants them to do—and do it.

Johnson, a member of Christ the King Lutheran, Wilson, Wis., is the executive secretary of the WMF.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY IN ACTION

BY DAWN JOHNSON

Bible College closes; events cancelled

In response to the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Free Lutheran Bible College announced the closing of its campus on March 19, as well as the cancellation of the spring Choir tour, Mexico mission trip, and gospel team outings. Future events such as spring Campus Days, planned for April 17-19, were also cancelled.

The last day of on-site classes were held March 16 after the college's administration announced the changes to the student body during a service the previous evening. Students were asked to leave campus by March 19, and nine days of scheduled classes before the planned spring break were offered in a modular format via online resources. As of the print deadline, the college was planning on having students return to campus on Tuesday, April 14.

"We appreciate the substantial sacrifices and inconveniences our students are about to endure," said Pastor Wade Mobley, president of FLBCS. "We will do our best to retain much of the academic and spiritual nurture value of the semester."

Mobley stated that students would receive prorated credit for room and board.

Seminary classes were expected to continue on campus, with slight modifications to the schedule to accommodate the required special distances enacted by the federal government to contain the effects of the virus.

Plans were still being made to accommodate the various international students who also live on campus.



Benson installed at Newark Lutheran

Pastor Jon Benson (front, second from left) was installed Feb. 23 at Newark Lutheran, Newark, Ill., with Pastor Gary Jorgenson, assistant to the president of the AFLC (next to Benson), officiating. Also pictured are members of the church council.

Kosel installed at Buffalo Lake Lutheran



Licensed Pastor Paul Kosel (right) was installed Jan. 12 at Buffalo Lake Lutheran, rural Eden, S.D. Pastor Gary Jorgenson (left), assistant to the president of the AFLC, officiated.

Journey Missions team assists Brazil ministry

AFLC Journey Missions sent a team of five volunteers to Campo Mourão, Brazil, Jan. 18-Feb. 1 to work on several projects at Acampamento Fazenda Retiro Cristão, a retreat camp used by AFLC-Brazil. The projects included removing a veranda from the camp's dining hall in preparation for a new roof and updating a bathroom. Both projects assist the ministry as it readied to host another season of camps and retreats. An expected 350 people planned to attend Carnival Camp, making the bathrooms a much-needed addition for those tent camping.

Journey Missions will travel to Brazil July 16-Aug. 6. For more information on this trip, please visit the Journey Missions website at aflworldmissions.org/journey-missions.

TOP: The team renovated the bathroom, removing its roof, installing and extending brick walls, and installing a new roof. RIGHT: Steve Deysher, Bill Sheldon, Pastor John Lee, Dalton Zeiszler, Valdecir, and Pastor Jonathan Abel formed the work team. (Not pictured, Jon Nelson).



SMELL THE ROSES

BY PASTOR DAN GILES

There's a rose garden beside the driveway in front of my house. I know it's there.

I water it, prune the thorny bushes twice a year, and try to avoid getting tangled up in them as I get in and out of my car. But most of the time I walk past it without really thinking about it. I'm usually on my way somewhere else and thinking about other things as I pass by the roses. They're just there, in the background.

I have to discipline myself once in a while to stop, pay attention, admire the beauty of what's growing there, and at the risk of sounding like a tired old cliché, smell the roses. If I don't specifically take time to do that, it will never happen. Life encroaches.

As Christians we know that the Lord Jesus lived and died for our salvation. An awareness of our own sin and the great mercy and forgiveness of God forms the backdrop of our lives. At some level deep inside, we're aware of His presence and appreciate His forgiveness. We confess our sins on Sunday morning and then hear our pastor remind us of God's forgiveness.

But as the rush of life carries us along, we often allow the acute awareness of what the Lord Jesus has done for us and of how much we have been forgiven to fade into the background, like my rosebushes.

Lent provides us with the opportunity to stop and take a good look at the breathtaking

beauty of God's love for us—to think about how much our salvation cost the Lord Jesus and the depths of His love for us.

Lent gives us an opportunity to remember all that we have been forgiven and all that He is forgiving us even now, as we take the time to honestly assess our sometimes-wobbly commitment to Jesus.

For several years in a row we have hosted the Home Missions Retreat here in Mesa, Ariz. We love meeting people from churches all over the country and the fellowship with people who attend and serve those churches. We've learned so much from each of them about what God is doing where they live. The variety of gifts and of ways to minister the love of Jesus in each community is astonishing. The incredibly varied ways that our churches have found to effectively communicate the gospel in each place are sources of wonderment and joy as we see God's hand at work, drawing people's hearts to Himself.

Lent is a tool for communicating the gospel

in a fresh way each year. Some churches illustrate this forgiveness by putting ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday. Some celebrate communion on that day. Others have a time of special prayer and hear the story once again from the Bible. Others show a video or a PowerPoint illustration of the gospel story. Some people fast and pray.

When I was a child, we had a series of filmstrips (ancient, stone-age technology that they had before PowerPoint) that illustrated the details of the last week of the earthly life and the death of the Lord Jesus. I can still see those pictures in my mind, and it's been a (really!) long time. However we do it, observing Lent gives us an opportunity to remind ourselves, our children, and our community of the great truth of salvation in Jesus and stop to think of the beauty of His forgiveness.

Giles serves Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Luke Emerson has accepted a call to serve Peace Lutheran, St. Francis, Kan. Emerson has resigned from serving Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash., effective the end of April.

Pastor Paul Kneeland has announced his plans to step down as pastor of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn., at the end of June. He has not made any further plans for ministry after June.

Pastor Dan Hurner has accepted the position as part-time network coordinator for AFLC Youth Ministries. Hurner, who is the pastor of youth and family ministry at the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, Minn., replaces Pastor Eric Christenson who has stepped down at the request of the Youth Board as he takes on a new with the Schools Corporation as facilities director.

Pastor Jerry Nikunen is serving as interim pastor of Holmes Evangelical Lutheran, Clarion, Iowa.

Pastor Wayne Hjermsstad, who has been serving as interim pastor at Word of Life Free Lutheran, Upsala, Minn., will be available for interim ministry in June.

The FLC Home Missions Committee announced at its recent retreat in Mesa, Ariz., that it is searching for a replacement for long-time Alaska missionary **Jeff Swanson**. The committee is working together with the leadership at Hilltop Christian Fellowship, Naknek, in the search. Swanson and his wife, Jane, plan to move to Kansas later this year, where Jeff hopes to be engaged in evangelism and continued support of the Alaska Mission.

The **Hauge Lutheran Innermission Federation** will celebrate its 100th anniversary April 17-19 at Elim Lutheran, Osakis, Minn., with Pastor Lyndell Quam hosting. The event will include evening services and a Sunday worship service with guest speaker Timothy Tingelstad, a circuit judge for Minnesota's Ninth Judicial District.

FEBRUARY MEMORIALS

Bible College

Gladys Haugen
Ruth Claus
Joyce Stave

FLAPS

Sandra Wendell

Home Missions

Marwood Hunstad

Seminary

Pearl Erickson

World Missions

Helen Larson

Scott Naylor

WMF

Carol Hensrud

Phyllis Kittleson

Graduating seminarians take calls to congregations

Several 2020 graduates of the Free Lutheran Seminary have accepted calls to AFLC congregations. They include:

Brian Lunn has accepted a call to serve Word of Life Free Lutheran, Upsala, Minn.

David Handsaker has accepted a call to serve St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn.

Erin Tormanen has accepted a call to serve Our Savior's Free Lutheran and First English Lutheran of Lostwood, Stanley, N.D.

Brian Westerbur has accepted a call to serve Bethel Free Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.

Bryce McMinn has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor at Ruthfred Evangelical Free Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa.

Kevin Hall has accepted a call to serve Westaker Free Lutheran, Newfolden, Minn.

Andrew Kneeland has accepted a call to serve Gloria Dei Lutheran, St. Louis, Mo., while he pursues a PhD in historical theology at Concordia Seminary.

Biographies of the entire graduating class will be included in the May issue, which will feature the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary.



Free Lutheran Bible College announces summer teams

The Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn., will send out six summer teams to travel and share Christ's love through music, vacation Bible school, and camp ministry for ten weeks during the summer of 2020. FLBC asks for prayer for these students as they prepare for summer ministry May 30 through Aug. 8. The team rosters include:

Ambassadors: Keziah Quanbeck, Caley Pederson, Kristina Korhonen, Micah Moan, and Hunter Berntson.

Foundation: Miah Johnson, Phoebe Holt, Isak Olson, and Mark Thons aard.

Jeremiah: Lydia Carr, Miciah Renn, Micah Setness, and Matthew Monseth.

Covenant: Sarah Duffy, Hannah Boyer, Brett Erickson, and William Alverson.

Joshua: Ashley Feist, Madi Trussoni, Nick Mathsen, and Weston Napier.

Cornerstone: Bobbi Jo Alverson, Grace Taylor, Mikah Olson, and Christian Bickel.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-February 29, 2020

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$29,937	\$76,368	\$102,326
Evangelism	6,793	15,945	28,015
Youth Ministries	7,756	18,702	25,093
Parish Education	6,514	18,422	32,658
Seminary	26,204	56,886	65,222
Bible College	37,895	77,693	101,653
Home Missions	17,441	51,818	81,815
World Missions	38,700	83,630	128,130
Personal Support	62,543	133,112	110,517
TOTALS	\$233,783	\$532,577	\$675,429

For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving

ASHES AND ALLELUIAS

Life seemed simpler when I was young. I grew up in a community where Roman Catholicism was strong, and on Ash Wednesday all of the Catholic kids came to school with dirty foreheads. They apparently attended early morning services and told us curious Protestants that the ashes weren't supposed to be washed off all



Pastor Robert Lee

day. Did Protestants ever do this? Never, for such things did not happen in the world that I knew.

But now the ashes are not just for Catholics anymore. A few years ago, I was invited to participate in a Lutheran Ash Wednesday service where a little container of what looked like black paste was handed to me, prepared from the Palm Sunday palms of the previous year. It's for the "imposition," I was informed, which felt more like an inquisition to me, as I was expected to know what to do. "Out of dust you were taken. Unto dust you shall return." My trembling finger made the cross on the forehead look more like an "x," and I probably spoiled the whole procedure by incorrectly adding, "Out of the dust shall you rise again."

Yes, yes, before you chide me, I will accept that it may be a meaningful tradition for many. Luther would not have objected, either, if we read him rightly, for he taught that the old church traditions could be retained after the Reformation, as long as they were not contrary to the gospel and forbidden by Holy Scripture.

Traditions are a complicated issue, that's for sure, for both Lent and Easter, concerning both ashes and alleluias. (Is the word "alleluia" included in any other hymns than ones for Easter?) Tradition as much as the lyrics may determine the hymns we sing. In a congregation where the *Service Book and Hymnal* (the red SBH) replaced the *Concordia Hymnal*, an insert with a

copy of the hymn "Easter Morrow Stills Our Sorrow" (omitted from the SBH) was added to the bulletins on Easter Sunday, because "we always sing it on Easter Sunday." It's one of my favorite Easter heritage hymns, too, by the way, and we should be grateful that our *Ambassador Hymnal* includes it.

It's not only traditional hymns that we expect to hear every year. There is the tradition of Easter sunrise services and breakfasts, but one might observe that many/most aren't held at sunrise anymore due to the fact that people really don't want to get ready and go to church so early. In most of our homes there may be an assortment of Easter traditions ... colored eggs and baskets of candy, special foods for dinner, elaborate hats, etc. (Incidentally, more than 50 years ago I wrote my first article for our church magazine, and it was entitled, "Farewell to the Easter Bunny.")

Traditions are comfortable, for they are part of what binds together congregations and families. Pity the family that has no traditions! But the trouble with traditions is that they are so much about me ... what I like, what is familiar to me, what makes me feel properly worshipful. It's too easy for us to miss the fact that the heart of our ashes and alleluia traditions is Jesus.

Lent is all about Jesus. Though our devotional readings and Lenten services, we walk the road to Calvary through the eyes of faith ... the upper room, Gethsemane, the courtroom, the way of sorrows, and finally Golgotha, the place of the skull. It's a familiar road for most of us, yet there always seems to be something new to ponder. It is finished; the price for my sins

has been paid. The heart of Lent is Jesus, not our traditions for observing the holy season.

Easter is all about Jesus. It's Resurrection Day! Because He lives, everything has changed; everything has become new. Now we visit the empty tomb through the eyes of faith, hopefully sensing both the fear and great joy that the women knew on that first Resurrection Day (Matthew 28:8). Our Easter services may feature lovely displays of flowers and extra musical selections. The traditional hymns are sung, the Scripture lessons read,

... the trouble with traditions is that they are so much about me ... what I like, what is familiar to me, what makes me feel properly worshipful.

and we are privileged to listen to messages that should move us again to gratefully acknowledge the awesome reality of the gospel good news that our Savior lives. The heart of Easter is Jesus, not our traditions for observing this festival day.

Best wishes, dear readers, for a Lenten season and Easter Sunday filled with just enough tradition to connect you with a meaningful past and not so much tradition that it hinders you from a renewed worship of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

association retreat center

A FOCUS ON TIME WITH GOD

BY ARC STAFF

By the time you read this, our staff will have started construction and remodeling projects for the spring on buildings at the Association Retreat Center. We are looking forward to May 22-24 when our staff will host a spring family work weekend as we prepare the grounds for another summer camp season. We host our ARC volunteers over Memorial Day weekend, offering food and lodging to those who volunteer their time to help us with various projects around our campus. Please join us for a few hours, a day, or the entire weekend. Families, individuals, and church groups are welcome.

This summer will bring much hustle and bustle to the ARC, including the joy of hosting the AFLC Annual Conference June 9-12 with a theme of "Will He find faith" taken from Luke 18:8. We also anticipate hosting the ARC Family Camp Aug. 2-8 with the theme of "Focused." We will focus on what God is doing and what He has

planned for us. We must not lose the focus that "He who has called us is faithful" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

We have written to you about the mission of the ARC before and we want to share this with you again. Kirk Rautio, our executive director, is spending some time in our community, sharing our mission and spreading the good news of the gospel to our community members. This, dear friends, is another way we are called to serve through the ministry of the ARC. Kirk has had the opportunity to share about the ARC to business members, leaders, board members, and community members. Many of these conversations have led to situations similar to the Parable of the Seed recorded in Luke 8. This is a time to be willing to be constant and to be used by God.

The ARC calendar of events is filling up for all of us and time is precious, but this is what being mission minded is all about. God asks us to be willing to take time to be used by Him and from there He directs our

paths. The founders of the ARC had a vision some 40 years ago to have a place where the doors would be open and where people could come to take time away from the busyness of life to be with the Lord. While our visitors are here, our staff is happy to serve them. Our vision hasn't changed.

Maybe you don't have a place like the ARC in your area where you can retreat and spend time with the Lord. But maybe you have a front porch, a coffee table, a meeting place, a church, a moment in time ... to be used, to be open, to be willing. How will God use you today? Yes, our schedules can get busy, but in the scope of eternity we need to invest in quality time with the Lord.

God bless you all.

*The Association Retreat Center is located near
Osceola, Wis.*