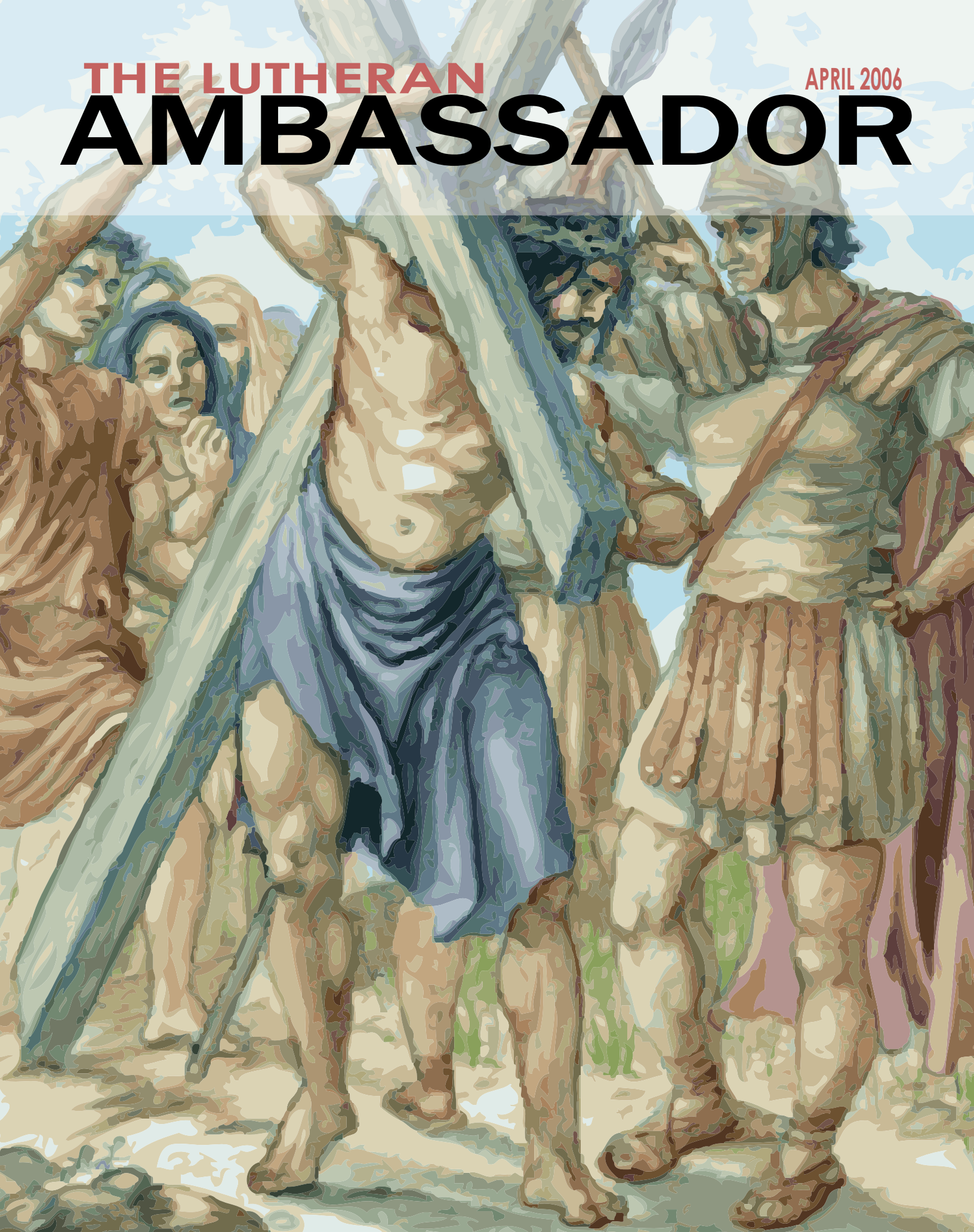


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

APRIL 2006



**The Lenten season
has renewed
meaning for me as
we study together
the life of Jesus.
Easter will have
greater meaning.
Jesus was the
innocent sacrifice
for my sin!**

More than a *review*

I have been helping teach the third and fourth grade Sunday school class at my church. We use the AFLC Sunday school material and have been studying the Apostle's Creed. Right now we are in the second book, "Son: Our Redeemer."

It has been so good to learn about Jesus during this time of the year. I wonder if I am not learning more than the students. If not, it has been a wonderful review for me as we enter the Lenten and Easter season. It reminds me again of my sinfulness and how God's promise for redemption was fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

First, I am thankful for the faithfulness of the AFLC in producing Sunday school materials that are biblical and clearly teach the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. It has been so good to share this message with my Sunday school class and help them in understanding their need for a Savior.

Second, I believe these lessons have helped to give a greater understanding to the children of what the Lenten and Easter season is all about.

Last, it has been a great review for me. The Lenten season has renewed meaning for me as we study together the life of Jesus. Easter will have greater meaning. Jesus was the innocent sacrifice for my sin! He arose again to bring salvation and eternal life to me. And this is not only for me, but for the children in my Sunday school class, and the whole world.

I have much to be thankful for this Lenten and Easter season. My sins are forgiven and I have life eternal because of God's love for me in sending Jesus to the cross to pay for my sin. As we studied today in our lesson, I have been redeemed. Hallelujah!

— Carol Knapp
Sunburg Free Lutheran
Sunburg, MN

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THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

Editorial Board Pastor John Mundfrom
Oryen Benrud
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor James L. Johnson

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The way of the cross, then, is a way of death: a once-and-for-all death of the Son of God that defines the rest of our lives, and the daily death that we undergo as we turn from self to Christ, from looking within to looking without, from seeking our own happiness and glory to seeking God's glory and the good of our neighbor.

— Michael Horton
In the Face of God

By the atoning death of His Son God has removed that which hindered Him from forgiving His enemies. Now God can, unhindered and unbound, overwhelm His enemies with His boundless love.

— O. Hallesby
God's Word for Today

If Jesus was raised by the Spirit, and that exact same Spirit lives in us, then that exact same Spirit will also one day raise us. We have a hope of a future resurrection because of one that happened in the past, and the team that pulled off the first one is the same team that will pull off the future one. Count on it.

— David Haney

Death and its root of sin are conquered; it is settled for us; we are alive forever ... If there ever is a nonevent for the Christian, it is his own death. He has already been through real death — with the Conqueror.

— Roger Palms



His suffering
your crown

By Linda Korhonen

Life is hard! From a broken arm (my current situation), to broken dreams, to broken relationships, no one is exempt from problems. No matter what kind of pain or disappointment you're experiencing right now, don't fall into the trap of asking "Why?" Instead, ask God what He wants to teach you through it. Let's learn from the example of Jesus as we face crisis times of our own.

Suffering is inevitable

Pain, suffering and death all came as a result of the fall into sin. The curse will not be gone until we enter heaven (Revelation 22:3), so Christians will also experience these things in this life. Jesus predicted it: "In this world, you will have trouble" (John 16:33). Don't be surprised when trials come. Jesus Himself did not escape them.

We need the Lord

Our natural inclination is to be self-reliant, but our times of weakness and pain lead us to be God-reliant. Hardships humble us and show us how weak we really are. Spiritual growth comes when we yield ourselves to His control and trust Him, no matter what comes. Jesus was one with His Father. He said, "It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:11). He lived in complete surrender to do His Father's will.

Keep eternity in view

Jesus always kept His eternal focus. He knew why His Father had sent Him. Our sufferings here can't even be compared to the glory ahead (Romans 8:18). "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (II Corinthians 4:18).

Let others help

Christ's betrayal and arrest were shortly after the time when He allowed a woman to come and pour expensive perfume on His head. Many around Him were harshly criticizing her for being wasteful, but Jesus complimented her: "She has done a beautiful thing to me. ... She did what she could" (Mark 14:3-9). I have often found great

comfort in those words. Often friends want to help us in some tangible ways. When I broke my arm, I was blessed by people bringing food, driving me to the hospital, helping clean my house, giving me a perm, etc. So don't be too proud to let them be a blessing (and receive a blessing) as they glorify God through their kindnesses!

Just ask

Jesus asked His closest disciples to be with Him and pray there at the Mount of Olives when He was so overwhelmed with sorrow (Matthew 26:36-41). Don't carry your burden alone.

Get on your knees

If Jesus often went to His Father in special times of prayer, how much more do we need it? At Gethsemane, He poured out His anguish in earnest prayer to His Father (Luke 22:44). He asked the same request three times. God never tires of us pouring out our hearts to Him. Keep casting your burdens on the Lord.

Be prepared to forgive

Jesus did everything *perfectly*, and yet He was scorned and hated in the worst way possible — tortured to death. "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (I Peter 2:23). On the cross, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." Even in His closest circle of friends, one denied knowing Him and one betrayed Him to His enemies! You and I *will* be misunderstood and hurt by others, too. Forgiving them frees us from the bondage of bitterness. Stop dwelling on what people think or say or do, and get your focus on the Lord. He will not disappoint you.

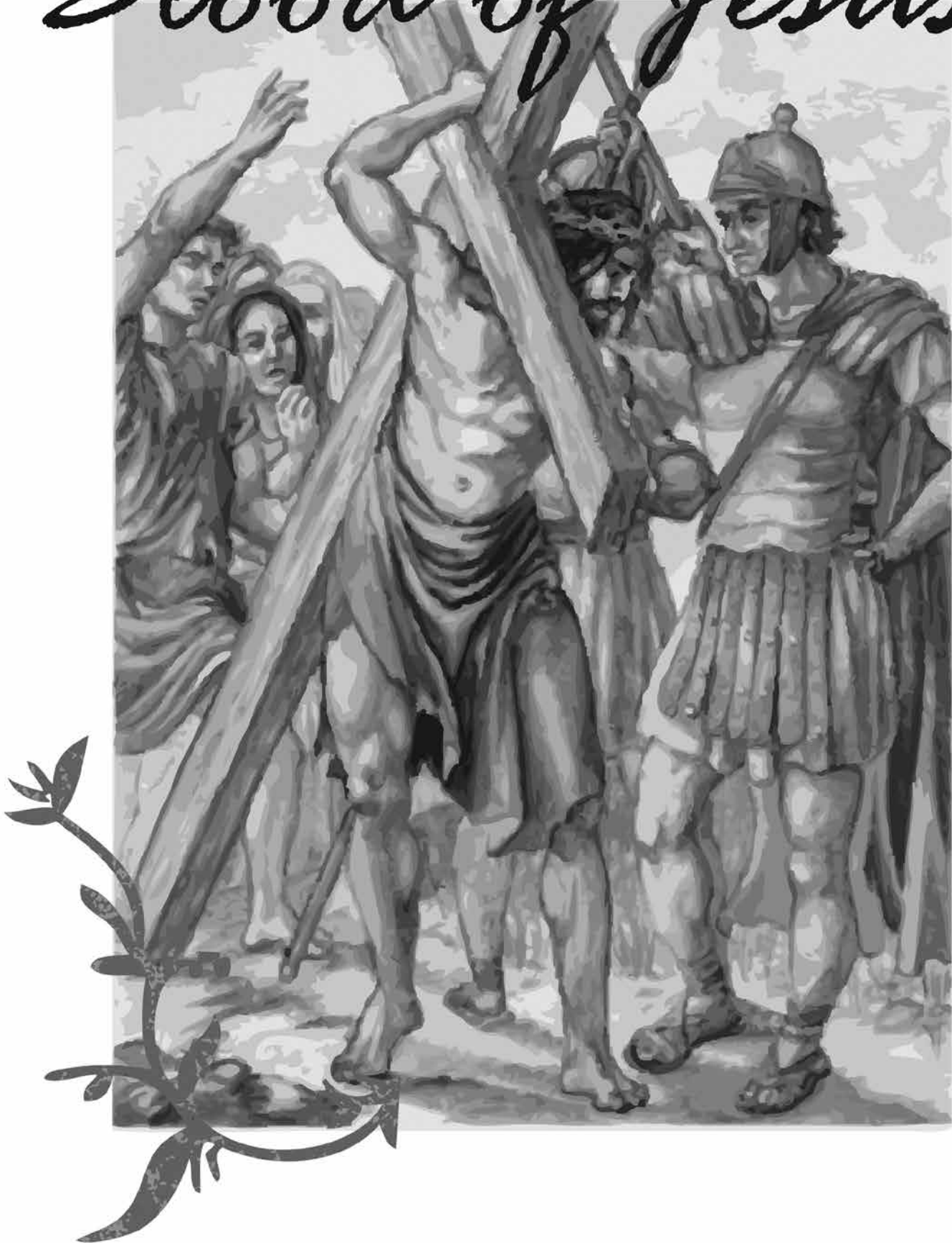
Get your eyes off yourself

Look around you for someone who needs your help. When Jesus was dying on the cross, in

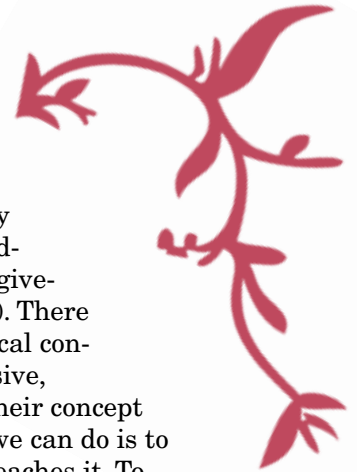


See **SUFFERING**, page 21

Blood of Jesus



By Pastor Michael Peterson



I often wear a cross necklace. Sometimes I wear a small wooden one, but at certain times I wear a larger handcrafted metal budded cross from Mexico, which someone in Texas gave me as a gift. Both look very nice, and even nicer are the beautiful gold-plated crosses that adorn the altars at the two churches where I preach. The altars are also nice. Both are wooden, but the one at Ortley Lutheran is stained a deep, rich wood tone, while the one at Egeland Lutheran is painted white with gold trim. We keep our altarpieces and our crosses polished, dusted, and looking nice as a way of honoring God in His sanctuary.

But the first altars and the first crosses did not look, or smell, like our altars and crosses. They were soaked with blood, not polished with Lemon Fresh Joy. When an Israelite brought a bull to the Tabernacle for a burnt offering, the God-given command was, “He shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting” (Leviticus 1:5).

The Tabernacle and Temple were bloody places: “For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.’ And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:19-22).

The cross was a brutal instrument of execution, causing a slow, excruciating death that sometimes lingered for days. When the movie “The Passion of the Christ” came out, some asked me if I thought that Christ’s suffering and death was really as painful as the film portrays. I replied that it no doubt was even worse in real life. About the same time that film came out, a parishioner visited Germany and saw, in a museum, unspeakably cruel instruments of torture used by the Nazis. Is it hard for us to believe that Christ suffered even more? In our everyday familiarity with the truth that Jesus died for our sins, have we become out of touch with the reality of His blood and His pain?

Why did Jesus shed His blood? “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). “[Jesus] entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12).

The blood of Jesus Christ is serious business. It

teaches us that we need to take the Bible seriously, as both Old and New Testaments clearly teach that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). There are those who find the biblical concept of blood sacrifice offensive, because it doesn’t fit with their concept of a “kind, loving God.” All we can do is to point out that God’s Word teaches it. To reject the blood is to reject God’s Word.

The blood of Jesus Christ teaches us that we need to take sin seriously. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a). Perhaps the reason why some are offended to hear that bloodshed is required to atone for sin is that deep down they really don’t think that sin is all that bad. But the seriousness of the penalty shows the seriousness of the offense.

The blood of Jesus Christ teaches us that we need to take God’s holiness seriously. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). If we had just an inkling of how awesome the LORD is in His holiness and majesty, we would say with Isaiah, “Woe is me!” (Isaiah 6:5).

The blood of Jesus Christ teaches us that we need to take His free gift of forgiveness seriously. There is no other way for our sins to be cleansed, for “the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Romans 3:23-25).

The blood of Jesus Christ teaches us that we need to take the call to discipleship seriously. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

The blood of Jesus Christ teaches us that we need to take the love of God seriously. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Do we take seriously what God has done for us? If so, let us not minimize or neglect the message of the cross and the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

Peterson is pastor of Ortley Free Lutheran, Ortley, S.D., and Egeland Lutheran, Waubay, S.D.

Res



urrected truth

By Tim Erhardt

Some scholars believe that Christ died Friday the 14th of Nisan in the Jewish calendar in the year 33 A.D. Too late in the day to make the Friday evening edition of the *Jerusalem Times-Chronicle*, and there being no Saturday paper the following day (observing the Sabbath), imagine the Sunday morning headlines: “Earthquake Hits Jerusalem: Christ Defeated!”

Earlier that Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and some of the other women arrived at the tomb in order to further attend Christ’s body, only to discover Him missing. Later that very morning, Jesus revealed Himself to Mary and comforted her. News of His resurrection spread like wildfire amongst Jesus’ followers as He revealed Himself to more than 500 people over the following weeks.

Was our imaginary headline correct and the news of Christ’s resurrection a fabrication? The greatest story of all time, past, present, and future, the good news of the gospel, was initiated that morning. According to eyewitness accounts from His followers, the headline would have been merely incomplete. It should have read, “Earthquake Hits Jerusalem: Christ Defeated Death!”

More than 2,000 years later, people still want to believe the first headline, “Christ Defeated!” After all, what evidence exists that He could be believed and that the followers of Christ were

correct?

While alive, Jesus promised many times that He would be resurrected (see Matthew 16:21; 17:9; 26:32; John 2:19). Was this “good teacher” just making it up? In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis wrote that if someone claimed the kinds of things Jesus said about himself, “He would ... be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg.” According to Lewis’s way of thinking, He either was who he said He was, God Almighty, or He was an evil man (“*aut Deus aut malus homo*”¹).

Many arguments may be made to help us establish the veracity of Christ’s claims. One is the simple fact of the empty tomb. It was an incredulous claim! The disciples themselves did not believe what the women returning from the grave told them: “These words appeared to them as nonsense and they would not believe them” (Luke 24:11). Why so unbelievable? There was a Roman guard stationed at the officially sealed tomb made up, likely, of 16 battle-hardened soldiers, sworn to fulfill their duty to prevent the theft of Jesus’ body or face death themselves (Matthew 27:66). Also, the body had been wrapped in about 75 pounds of sticky spices and cloth, yet the report was that the cloth was just left lying there² (John 19:39-40; 20:4-8). Furthermore, we know that the authorities were concerned that something would happen to the body





(Matthew 27:62-65) yet no evidence exists to disprove the claim. The fact that the authorities, who had a large interest in disputing any claims, apparently accepted the fact of the empty tomb is a strong piece of evidence.

The existence of many different eyewitness accounts of seeing and interacting with Jesus after His death is a convincing argument. These were not third-party accounts, “I know someone, who knows someone,” but were attested to by the witnesses themselves. Paul recounts the post-resurrection proof in his letter to the Corinthians: “He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve [disciples]. After that He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom remain [as living witnesses] until now ... then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all ... He appeared to me [Paul] also [after Christ’s ascension].” Paul made sure the Corinthians knew the claim was not just His opinion, but at the time of writing the letter, some witnesses remained alive and the story could be checked.

To me, the strongest evidence comes from the witness of the transformed lives of the followers. The disciples abandoned Jesus and denied any association with Him during the arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Just a few days later they had life-changing encounters with a physically resurrected Jesus. They were transformed from men too scared to admit association with Jesus into bold proclaimers of His resurrection. He was so real to them that they were now ready to die for their convictions. It has been said that people will often die for convictions of things they believe to be true, but it is never the case that people are willing to die for something they know to be false. Their willingness to die for their convictions disproves assertions that the disciples conspired to perform fraud and stole Jesus’ body. They had nothing to gain and everything to lose if they were merely following something they knew to be false.

The women at the grave, the frightened disciples trying to find comfort and safety in their small group, the hundreds of others Jesus appeared to in the days following His crucifixion, and every believer since has to accept, be con-

vinced of, the *fait accompli* of the resurrection. As convincing as these and other arguments may seem to some, they fall short of convincing everyone. I guess I have difficulty thinking that people come to experience the Lord through convincing arguments such as I just made.

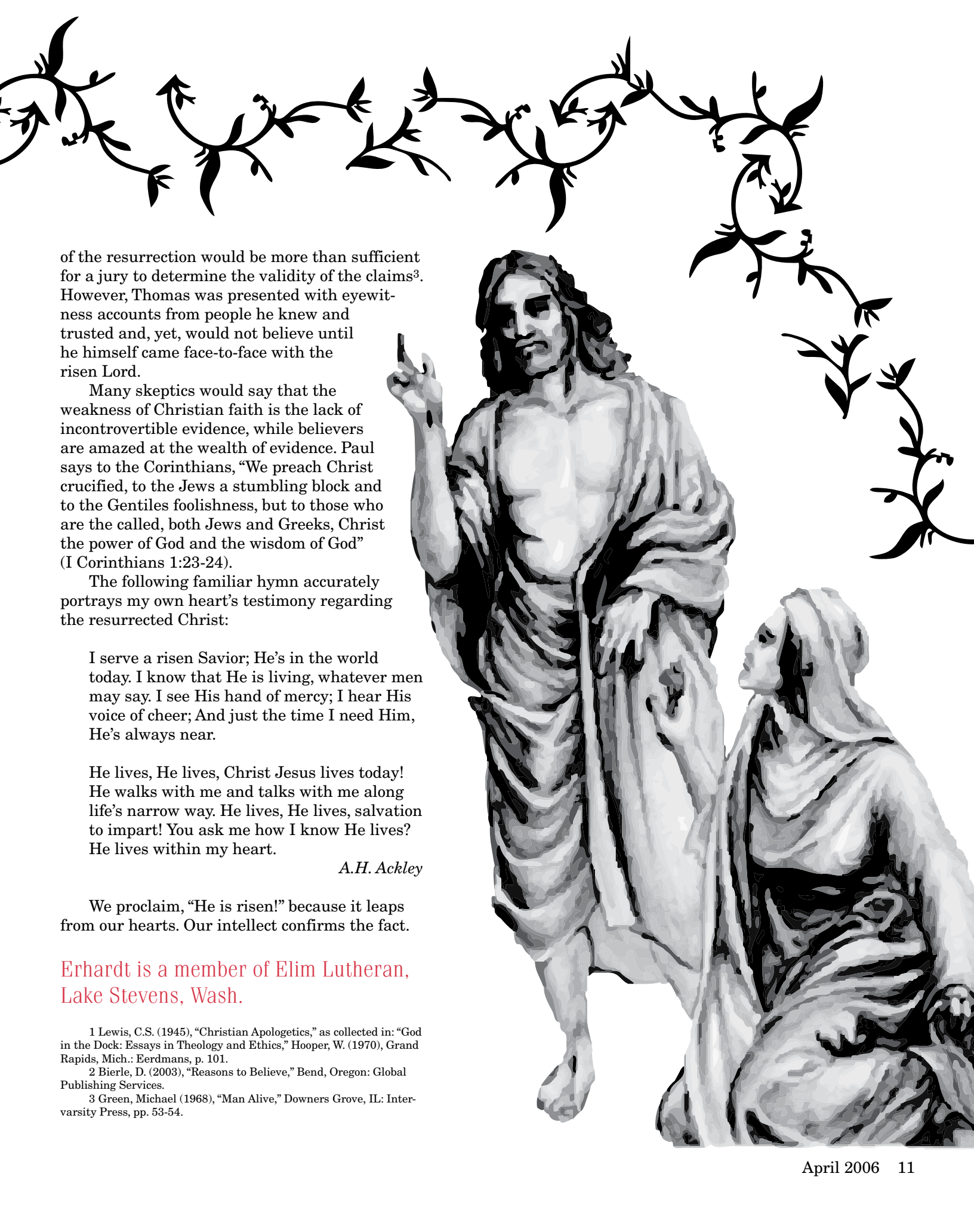
The true skeptic will always reject such arguments on an intellectual basis because all the evidence available will never be enough. It is when the skeptic is confronted by Jesus face-to-face on a spiritual basis that the arguments fall away and the skeptic asks Christ to live within.

I have studied Josh McDowell, C.S. Lewis, and many other Christians who were notorious skeptics. Although they often say the evidence for Christ became overwhelming, I am convinced by their stories that they didn’t believe until they humbled their hearts and their minds in quiet submission to Him. It seems that after their conversions, their intellect confirmed what they had already discovered in their hearts.

The apostle Paul, who before the Damascus road experience was the skeptic Saul, is another similar example. After conversion, his intellect confirmed the reality of a risen Lord whom he had dramatically met and accepted in a face-to-face confrontation. Suddenly he found himself emptied of all his previous arguments; they meant nothing. His great God-given intellect was redirected. After the scales fell from his eyes, we are told, “Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 9:22). On the subject of the resurrection of Christ, he bluntly said, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (I Corinthians 15:14).

The person who would be convinced purely by my arguments this week would just as easily be convinced by the logic of an intellectual atheist next week. The scriptural and historical evidence for Christ’s life, death and resurrection are powerful. But until linked with the evidence of Christ in your own heart, it will not be truly convincing.

Some have pointed out that in a court of law, the amount and quality of the evidence in favor



of the resurrection would be more than sufficient for a jury to determine the validity of the claims³. However, Thomas was presented with eyewitness accounts from people he knew and trusted and, yet, would not believe until he himself came face-to-face with the risen Lord.

Many skeptics would say that the weakness of Christian faith is the lack of incontrovertible evidence, while believers are amazed at the wealth of evidence. Paul says to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:23-24).

The following familiar hymn accurately portrays my own heart's testimony regarding the resurrected Christ:

I serve a risen Savior; He's in the world today.
I know that He is living, whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer;
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

A.H. Ackley

We proclaim, "He is risen!" because it leaps from our hearts. Our intellect confirms the fact.

**Erhardt is a member of Elim Lutheran,
Lake Stevens, Wash.**

¹ Lewis, C.S. (1945), "Christian Apologetics," as collected in: "God in the Dock: Essays in Theology and Ethics," Hooper, W. (1970), Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, p. 101.

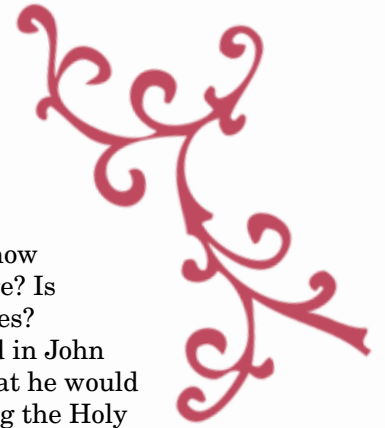
² Bierle, D. (2003), "Reasons to Believe," Bend, Oregon: Global Publishing Services.

³ Green, Michael (1968), "Man Alive," Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, pp. 53-54.

Holy Spirit

Revealer

By Pastor Dale Lankford



Do you ever wish you could have been there on that first Easter, witness to the resurrection of Jesus? There have been times in my life — and I have heard others concur — when I wish I could have been there. Not necessarily to experience the awe, wonder, and joy of the event, but instead to have seen it with my own eyes so that I can know for sure that the resurrection is true. So that I can say with Peter and the apostles that I was witness to the resurrection and have the same kind of confidence in declaring its truth as Peter had (Acts 2:32).

How *do* we know for sure? How can we have the same confidence in our witness? As I think about these questions, I wonder how we know anything is true if we haven't seen with our own eyes. A good example is the Apollo 11 landing on the moon. There are people who say that it never really happened. But if I am asked, I have no problem saying with confidence that it really happened. How can I say this? I didn't see it with my own eyes. Although I watched it on television, I know that it is possible for pictures to look real and not be true. But I have heard and read the testimonies of those who have been there and seen it for themselves. I can see the effects of the moon landing in the technologies that have come from it and the continued space travel since. And the arguments of those who would say it was all an elaborate deception are not very convincing at all.

We can use the same method of thought when referring to Jesus' resurrection. In God's Word we have the testimonies of those who were there. These words are more reliable than anything else written in those times and more reliable than anything written since.

We can see the effects of Christ's resurrection. The Christian church has a presence nearly everywhere on the globe, with the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as its cornerstone. And I have seen the lives of people completely transformed — brought from despair and death to joy and life — because of the event. I have seen my own life completely transformed because of the event. These are profound, convincing effects. And the arguments of those who would deny it are not very convincing.

But, still, I had times in my life and I've heard others say that they wish they could have been there to see and know for sure. Can we know for sure? Is there a way to see for ourselves?

Yes. Our example is found in John the Baptist. God told John that he would reveal the Christ to Him using the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (John 1:32-34). Because of what God did through the Holy Spirit, John could confidently say, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," and, "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

Although we may hear and read testimonies, although we may evaluate the evidence for ourselves, the only way we can come to know the truth of the resurrection and the reality of the hope and salvation that is in the resurrected Christ is by the work of the Holy Spirit. The only way we can be born anew is through the Holy Spirit (John 3). The only way we can see beyond ourselves and our earthly existence is through the Holy Spirit. For the things of men are appraised by the spirit of men, but the things of God are understood only through the Holy Spirit. "...Things which the eye has not seen and ear has not heard and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 2:9-10).

Do you have the need to see for yourself? Ask God to help you see through His Holy Spirit, and He will. His Spirit works through His Word. So spend time in the Scriptures, meditate on them, and search them. His Spirit dwells in the hearts of His people. Be among them, listen to them, hear the testimonies of what He has done in their lives. Devote yourself to prayer so that you can quiet your heart and be open to His Spirit. And as God reveals to you the truth of Jesus' resurrection, you will be able to see for yourself and know for sure.

Lankford is pastor of Lord of Life Free Lutheran, Mount Vernon, Wash.

AFLTS GRADUATES



Nathan Jore

I was born Aug. 1, 1979, to Dan and Cheryl Jore, Wycliffe missionaries in Brazil. My growing up years were spent on the move, four years at a time in Brazil followed by a year of furlough in the U.S. I consider Cuiaba, Brazil, as my hometown and Grace Free Lutheran in Maple Grove, Minn., as my adopted home congregation. Following high school I attended AFLBS for two years, graduating in 1999. I graduated from Northwestern College with a BA in ministry in 2002 following two years at Ruthfred Lutheran in Bethel Park, Pa., where I served as youth director. I met my wife, Rhoda Monseth, at Bible school and we were married Dec. 14, 2002. We have been blessed with two boys, Elijah (7/9/04) and Judah (11/26/05).

The Lord got a hold of my heart in my later high school years when I committed myself to seeking Him and surrendering myself to His will. The path He has brought me down has been one of great challenges and abundant joy. I have seen the Lord work in my own life and in the lives of many others. I testify that He is the one true God and I will never regret giving my life completely to Him. The path the Lord has laid out before me has led me to seminary, and now this year to an internship in Minot, N.D., under Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck. We are excited as a family to embark on the next phase of our journey as we hope to move to Uganda, East Africa, as missionaries by the end of October. This, too, will include many challenges, and we trust the Lord to lead us and give us strength. Thank you to the many in the AFLC family who have been praying us on our way!



John Brennan

God is so good! It is through His mercy and grace that I became a child of the Kingdom in my early 20s; and He sustains me now at 40, as an intern serving a God-loving, Bible-believing congregation in Melvin, Ill. My life has been a collection of God's acts of mercy and grace.

I was born in Oklahoma City in 1965 to godly parents who always maintained a stable, loving home. I was indeed graced as I grew up, in that those whom I admired most were people with great faith and personal integrity. I was most certainly blessed when God answered my prayer as I asked Him to make Michelle Heierding my wife nearly 20 years ago, and that beautiful blessing has become my dearest friend. God has gifted our marriage beyond description with two wonderful daughters, Kaley Nicole (13), and Bryce Manna (9).

I truly believe that God led my family to First Lutheran in Oklahoma City as I began to sense His call in earnest. Pastor Gerald Peterson has been such a huge influence in my life, as a fellow believer in God's Word, and as the kind of man (and pastor) I'd like to be.

My years in seminary were totally grace filled. The professors are devoted to their callings and are incredibly gifted teachers. As I was privileged to witness them walk with God, my own faith was bolstered. Their joyful dependence on God encouraged me to trust in Him more, and the amount of work they assigned forced me to! The AFLC is blessed to have these men of God shaping its future shepherds. God is so good indeed!

Dean Iverson

I was born Jan. 21, 1953, in Watford City, N.D., to Joseph and Verna (Skari) Iverson. I graduated from Williston High School and am a charter member of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D. There I found my bride of 20 years, Eileen (Tande) Iverson. I earned a bachelor's degree in business administration and aviation management from the University of North Dakota in 1998. I have worked in earth construction, farming, bus and truck driving, and airport security, operations and management.

I credit the godly character of my dad, the faithfulness of my mother and Christian grandparents with keeping me close to God's baptismal covenant. I remember the impact of God's call to the ministry vividly when I was a member of Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Dickinson, N.D. Through my years of extensive lay ministry work at Prince of Peace, Beulah, N.D., and other churches, God summoned me to ministry.

Through our experience at seminary, Eileen and I have learned of God's handiwork in drawing us closer to Him, setting us on a path of continued devotion and worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Halfway through seminary, Eileen was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer, which tested our faith in what God was doing, especially my call to ministry. God showed us His continued faithfulness and direction from His Word that ministry continues on while the harvest is ripe. Eileen has been cancer-free for 15 months and we revel in God's mercy and grace.

I am serving my internship at Free Lutheran Church of Roseau and Norland Free Lutheran, Roseau, Minn. My desire is, by the grace of God, to present myself "to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."



Rich Ramsbacher

I was born Feb. 19, 1957, in Utah to Richard and Marcella Ramsbacher. Moving at least five times in the next 12 years shaped my outlook on life. Having no real home base or home congregation to look to, I was a true nomad, a sojourner in this land. Neither Utah nor Colorado had many Lutheran churches. At one point we worshipped in a dinosaur museum. We depended on laymen except for one Sunday a month when a pastor came. I realized that a congregation does not need a beautiful building or a pastor in residence to worship.

I graduated from Mary College and St. Alexius Medical Center in Bismarck, N.D., with a BS in Radiologic Technology. In 1980, I married Kay Kle-salek. We lived in Garrison, N.D., and Yankton, S.D., before settling in Beulah, N.D., for 19 years. Our daughter, Katy, was born in 1991. We worshipped at Zion Lutheran Church (ELCA) during our time in Beulah.

God placed it on my heart to plant His Seed, His Word, in the hearts of men. As I explored where God wanted me to go, I found out that even though I did not agree with the ELCA, I was as Lutheran as can be. When introduced to the AFLC, I found I could believe the Bible and still be a part of a Lutheran body. It was affirmed on a daily basis at seminary that the Bible is the foundation of Christian life and Lutheran teaching.

I have been blessed during my internship in Culbertson and Brockton, Mont., with two congregations that believe in the sowing of God's Word, desiring to reach out to the lost, the unchurched, and those who have strayed from the presence of God. As any of the farmers out here will tell you, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Continue to pray for workers in God's fields.





Mark Richardson

I was born Dec. 10, 1978, to Mark and Suzan Richardson in Pittsburgh, Pa. Our family was Catholic and attended church sporadically, so growing up, I gave very little thought to God or other spiritual things, thinking that my life was fine since I was a good person.

During my freshman year in high school I became good friends with some students who witnessed to me about the need to know Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior. I attended youth group at Ruthfred Lutheran Church with them. After several months of reading the Bible and learning about Jesus I accepted Him as my Savior. It was during this time that I realized the truth of what the Lutheran church taught about the Scriptures and salvation by faith through grace. While attending the University of Pittsburgh I felt the call into the ministry. I thought I was as active in the ministry as I'd ever be since I was a youth group sponsor and worked in youth

Continued on page 22



Tomasz Chmiel

I was born May 10, 1977, in Trenec, Czech Republic to Jan Chmiel (father), Renata Chmielova (mother) — in the Czech language, female last names end in “ova.” My former home congregation was Trinec Silesian Lutheran Church. While in the U.S., I am a member of Grace Free Lutheran Church, Maple Grove, Minn.

I earned a bachelor's degree in tourism from the Czech Republic, then graduated from AFLBS and MTI before attending AFLTS. I married Miriam (Novotna) in 2005.

If I were to summarize what I've learned through these years in seminary it would be trusting the Lord and His guidance no matter if it makes sense or not. The same truth would apply to my internship in Mason, Wis.

God has been at work in my life this year and God has blessed me with a wonderful wife. I've been also really blessed to see God at work in the church

Continued on page 22



Steve Brown

My journey to AFLTS is more unusual than most. I grew up in the Lutheran church as a boy. I was saved and called to preach at age 9. At 17, as a student at Osseo High School, Osseo, Minn., I started preaching the gospel and leading souls to Christ. I graduated from Winona State University, Winona, Minn., and taught middle school for two years. I attended Asbury Theological Seminary (interdenominational) and graduated in 1990.

I married Cynthia in 1981, and we have seven wonderful children, David (23), Peter (22), Daniel (19), Matthew (16), Joshua (14), Joseph (11), and Gloria (9).

The Lord blessed my ministry as a pastor, but conflict arose due to doctrinal differences. I didn't feel that I was fitting in. The Lord led me to study Martin Luther's theology and I found I was much more a Lutheran than a

Continued on page 22



AMBASSADOR PUBLICATIONS

Minneapolis, Minnesota

To Order Resources

Available from AFLC Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or parished@aflc.org. Note that some of the materials may be borrowed from the Parish Ed lending library.

Further Resources

AFLC Parish Education also has a lending library of visualized mission stories for children and resource books for teaching missions, available upon request. Contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or email at parished@aflc.org

AFLC Parish Education RESOURCES

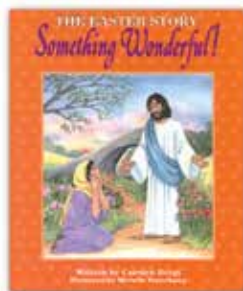
Celebrate Jesus! At Easter



Bring the family together to contemplate and celebrate the real reason for Lent and Easter — salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Includes Scripture readings, meditations, songs, prayers, crafts, family projects, and service ideas. \$8

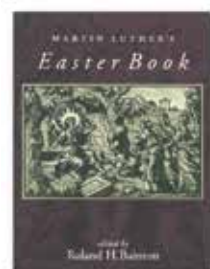
The Easter Story: Something Wonderful



A joyous celebration of God's love in Christ Jesus. He died on the cross and arose on Easter so we could have forgiveness of sins and eternal life!

Colorful illustrations and two Easter songs. Classroom edition includes cutout figures and scenes. Book \$3 (classroom size \$17)

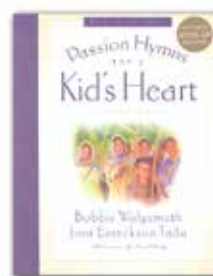
Martin Luther's Easter Book



Sermons exploring events from Holy Week through the resurrection, portraying Luther's thoughts on faith, human imperfection, salvation through grace, and the wonder of God. Illustrated with

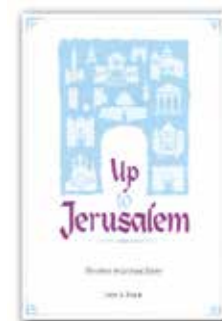
18 woodcuts by Virgil Solis, a contemporary of Luther's. May be read as a daily devotional during Lent and Easter. \$9.75

Passion Hymns for a Kid's Heart



Teach the meaning of the cross of Christ to children through these stories about 12 selected hymns, prayers, and Scripture. Includes music and CD. \$16

Up to Jerusalem



Follow the life of Jesus on the road to Jerusalem and the cross through 55 inspirational devotions. As you meditate on God's love and walk with Jesus, He will strengthen your faith. \$11.70

What Wondrous Love Is This



Scriptures and stories that inspired 12 hymns about the cross of Christ teach spiritual truths and encourage believers in their faith. Includes music and CD. \$16.00

Run with *endurance*

By Loiell Dyrud

As the first editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* from February 1963 until 1990, Pastor Raynard Huglen did perhaps more than any other individual to set a positive tone for the AFLC. He tirelessly explained through article and editorial who we were to new congregations, especially in the early years of the AFLC. All the while he was serving as a parish pastor or working at AFLBS.

Pastor Huglen has compiled a book of his writings. In his foreword, Huglen rather humorously confides he has chosen “the lazy man’s way of writing a book,” since virtually all of the articles in *The Race Before Us: Collected Writings of Raynard Huglen* were published in other periodicals, primarily *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

Some common threads are evident in his work: the necessity of a personal relationship with Christ, faithfulness to our Lutheran roots, and a firm belief in the biblical correctness of Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal’s blueprint for “free and living congregations.”

In 1990 Huglen wrote a 12-part series on the Fundamental Principles that guide us in the AFLC. In these articles, reprinted in his new book, he quotes extensively from Sverdrup and explains what these principles mean for the congregation. Had this book contained only the above-mentioned articles, it alone would have been well worth reading.

Wonderful gems are also found in a section called “Life on the Edge of Town,” a series of short commentaries and insights on a wide variety of topics ranging from the changing of seasons to one winter when a moose moved in for some days to share the author’s Newfolden, Minn., backyard.

Huglen’s attention to detail is never more evident than when he writes a series of travelogues. He includes articles written about his 1967 trip to Norway and the island of Huglo where his father was born. These are

touching accounts, written with tenderness as in the case where he enters the house where his father was raised and stands in silence for several minutes overcome with emotion. Huglen’s father left Norway in 1904, graduated from Augsburg Seminary, Minneapolis, and served as a pastor until his untimely death from diabetes in 1938, when Huglen was merely 10 years old.

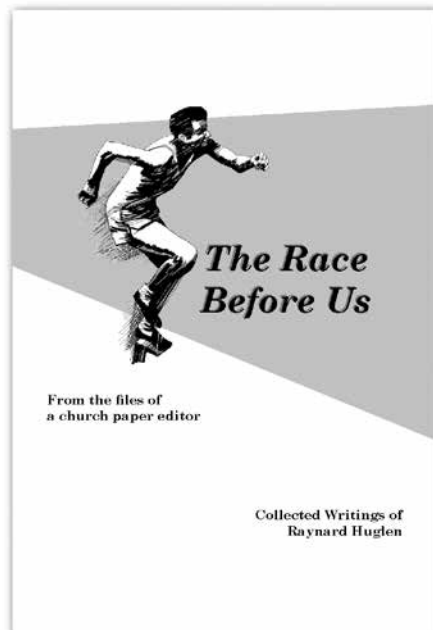
Of special interest are tributes written for some of the early founders of the AFLC at the time of their deaths, including Professor George Soberg, Pastor Fritjof Monseth, Pastor Julius Hermunslie, Dr. Iver Olson, and Pastor John Strand.

A section called “Special Articles” contains several fascinating pieces. Of note are “Where Three Oceans Meet,” which focuses on the tragic deaths of Lutheran Free Church missionaries Pastor and Mrs. Jens K. Nygaard en route to Madagascar, whose ship hit a mine in 1917 as it neared Capetown, South Africa. This section also includes two articles of significance for the AFLC — “Baptism and Conversion” (1989) and “Comparing the AFLC and the LFC” (1990).

Of more than 1,300 editorials, Huglen has chosen 45. Ones that stand out are “Prayer in the Public Schools,” “The Annual Conference,” “Homosexuality,” “The Calling of Pastors,” “Whatever Became of Sin?” and “Oftedal and Prayer.” Judging by some of the titles, one can see he didn’t back away from controversial topics.

Huglen is a man who remained faithful to his calling, a man God raised up at a crucial time in the AFLC’s history. We as an Association are richer because of this book, a compendium of gems to be treasured by every member of the AFLC.

Huglen’s book (259 pages, soft cover) is available for \$5 from AFLC Parish Education. Call (763) 545-5631 or email parished@aflc.org. Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minn., serves on the AFLC Board of Publications and Parish Education.



A return to Brazil

This past January my family and I were fortunate to be able to travel to Brazil with others from our church in Astoria, Ore. We went there to attend the 40th anniversary celebration of the AFLC Brazil, but I was excited because as a young child I had lived in Brazil.

In 1964 my father and mother accepted the call of God to serve as missionaries in Brazil. They partnered with missionaries John and Ruby Abel to build up the church and reach out to those who didn't know Jesus. I don't remember much of that time because I was so young. My memories are the stories and pictures my family has shared with me.

I looked forward to seeing the house and areas in which we had lived and the church my dad helped to build. And I did see them, but I found myself noticing other things while I was there. I watched people from various churches worship and praise God, the same God I worship in my church here in Astoria. I could not understand the language, but I could see evidence of the love of God pour out of the young and old as they sang and praised God. When the national pastors and church members spoke, I could sense the Word being shared with a sincere and passionate heart.

As I toured the Bible school campus I pictured in my mind the times my dad walked these same grounds. I also saw the Miriam Infant Home, Bible camp and local churches. Missionaries John Abel, Connely Dyrud and George Knapp shared how the work began with a vision and how it continues to grow.

Over the past 40 years God has blessed Brazilian mission work. But the work in this large country is not yet finished. There are many people in Brazil and around the world who have not heard how Jesus died and rose again to save mankind. That's what leads many in Brazil to reminisce — not just about the past — but about the future and how they can build more churches and reach more people for the Lord.

I pray we will remember our missionaries and national pastors with our gifts, offerings and prayers. They have given their time and sacrificed much. Forty years ago, Brazil must have seemed a



world away. Today, it just takes a few short hours to get to the AFLC mission work. A few short hours brought it closer to my family and myself. Times have changed, but people around the world still need to hear God's Word. We have a great group of people in Brazil working hard spreading the good news.

I had a wonderful experience while in Brazil. I encourage anyone who gets the chance to visit the mission work personally. You will not leave there the same.

— Kelly Grothe
Bethany Free Lutheran
Astoria, Ore.



FOCUS

Where is your focus? What is your priority? Are you focusing on Jesus and His will for your life or do you find yourself entangled in nonessential details that will make no difference in God's kingdom?

After reviewing the Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection in our women's Bible study, these questions nagged at me. It was unsettling to realize the four Gospels report the scenario of the empty tomb with different details regarding the women and angels. I have read these same Scriptures many times, but this time the variation in details stood out like blinking neon signs.

Matthew reports that when the women went to the tomb an angel came down from heaven, rolled back the stone and sat on it. Mark agrees that women approach the tomb but suggests the stone had been rolled away and a young man dressed in white sat on the right side. Luke agrees with Mark that the women found the stone rolled away but reports two men stood beside them. John reports Mary Magdalene looked into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

Praying for discernment, I read all four accounts again. Matthew, Mark and Luke all report, "He has risen," while John quotes Jesus' own words, "I am returning to my Father," which of course means "He has risen." All four Gospels are in unison in their focus on Jesus and His res-

urrection, which is the basis of our faith. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17).

This study helped me realize that I need to be conscious of keeping my focus on Jesus. It is the only way I can accomplish His will without getting sidetracked by seemingly urgent details. While we may be able to see and deal with many issues at once, we are each capable of only one focus — and it's up to us to choose that focus.

Once focused on Jesus, I understood the urgency of the instructions given by all four Gospels, "Go quickly and tell." I wish this were as easy as it sounds. I don't know about you, but "go tell" takes me way out of my comfort zone. This year I am claiming Philippians 4:13: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength," as I strive to speak up for Jesus in a world of unbelievers. Like many of you, I have responsibilities in the Christian arena, which are important. But when all is said and done, how many seeds will I have sown?

As believers our focus must be on Jesus, and our priority needs to be "go tell" unbelievers that Jesus has paid the price for all sins and is preparing a place for them in heaven. I praise God for the one who told me, and I challenge all Christian women to "get focused" and "go tell."

— Sandra Weaver
Zoar Lutheran Church
Hampden, N.D.

Dalton parish hosts heritage meetings

In February, members of the Dalton Free Lutheran Parish held a series of meetings with the theme: "An open invitation to revisit and renew the ongoing vision of free and living congregations." As many church bodies become increasingly confused and misguided on theological issues, it becomes even more important for us to have theological clarity and denominational vision. Our desire for these meetings was to reacquaint our own members with our church heritage (our congregations had been a part of the Lutheran Free Church and were founding members of the AFLC) and also to present an informational opportunity for interested people from outside our parish.

Pastor Bob Lee, AFLC president; Dr. Francis Monseth, dean of the seminary; and Pastor Jim Johnson, dean of the Bible school, were the speakers. During the two days, they all shared different aspects of our denominational heritage, its birth, the Springtime Revivals that swept through this area, AFLC church structure, theological convictions on foundational and current issues, and updates on our AFLC schools, the youth movement, present church growth, and a perspective on the future.

Our parish greatly benefited from this series! There has been a renewed excitement and commitment to the visions of free and living congregations, our newer members developed a more complete understanding of our church body, and a number of individuals and other churches have been in contact with us regarding finding a Bible-believing church/denominational home.

— Pastor Steve Carlson
Kvam, Tordenskjold, Zion-Sarpsborg Free Lutheran churches

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Gary Haug has accepted a call to serve Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn. Haug concluded his ministry at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., in March.

The National Day of Prayer is May 4. A rally, hosted by members of Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., will begin with a prayer service at 6 a.m. at the Medina Entertainment Center, Medina, Minn. The rally will include breakfast and special speaker Jon Engen, station manager of KTIS Christian Radio. The cost is \$15. For more information, contact Dar at (763) 473-3730. Or visit nationaldayofprayer.org for an event near you.

New Luther Valley Lutheran, McVile, N.D., has begun preparations for its 125th anniversary celebration in 2007. Mark your calendars for June 24, and more information will be available closer to the celebration date.

Members of the **AFLBS concert choir** will tour Eastern Europe during spring break. Leaving on March 29, the choir will travel to Poland, Slovakia and Vienna, Austria, and the Czech Republic to minister in music for two weeks. The choir will return to Minneapolis on April 14. For a detailed schedule of concerts and travel plans, visit www.flbs.org.

SUFFERING, from page 5

His deepest anguish, He cared for the needs of His mother as well as gave hope to the repentant thief on a cross next to Him. It wasn't the nails that kept Jesus on the cross: it was His *love* for you and me! He gave up His own rights so that we could be saved.

Proof of love

The scars on Jesus' body after his death — His hands, feet and side — were proof of cruel, unfair, wicked treatment. But to all who look with the eyes of faith, they are proof of His *love*! "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by His wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

We all carry scars of one kind or another from the hardships of life. Instead of using them as reminders of pain and wrongdoing, look at them with God's higher plan in mind. For instance, I am *choosing* to view the scars from my broken arm to remind me to thank God that I can use it and not take it for granted!

Death was not the end for Jesus, and neither will it be for us. Hallelujah! I love the title of the book written by a woman with cancer: "Either Way, I Win." Perhaps that's what it means in Romans 8 when it says that we are more than conquerors — we can't lose!

Korhonen is a member of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn.

RICHARDSON, from page 16

ministry at another area church. I remember questioning God and telling Him that He must have the wrong person. It was not long before Jesus changed my heart and all I wanted to do was to serve Him in any way He wanted to use me.

I married Diana (Duff) just two weeks before I started seminary. We have two children: Joseph (2) and Emma (7 months).

While in seminary, the Lord taught me the importance of His Word for all areas of life and the need for believers to be faithful witnesses for Him. During my internship at Calvary Lutheran, Wallace, S.D., I have seen firsthand a greater vision for healing Jesus has for those who live with hurt, pain and darkness. The Lord has strengthened and equipped me this past year and has solidified His calling me into the ministry.

CHMIEL, from page 16

I serve on my internship (Our Savior's Free Lutheran Church). God has done so many amazing things in this "little brown church." I can't but stand in awe and watch what He has done! I am really grateful to be part of it. It always makes me excited to see people experiencing God. I've also learned that nothing is too big to ask God in prayer. I have seen many people come to the Lord (both young and old), I have seen God answering our prayers in amazing ways, including starting a youth group, sending us new youth workers, and changing one girl who was involved in Satanism.

BROWN, from page 16

Methodist. A friend encouraged me to look for a Lutheran body and last spring I found out about the AFLC.

After meeting with the appropriate committees last June at the annual conference, I was accepted and asked to attend one year of seminary at AFLTS. It was a total miracle for me to move here last summer. While attending seminary I am learning afresh the faithfulness of God, as this is not the first time I have launched out by faith. Praise His name! The classes I am taking are simply confirming doctrine I already believe. I am among brethren who love the Word like I do and believe it is only Christ who can save. I believe I have found a niche where I can minister.

FEBRUARY AFLC Memorials

AFLBS

Roy Larson
Lucille Thundercloud (2)

Grace Oslund

General Fund

Clarice Nobler

Home Missions

Ronald Cuthbertson

Miriam Infant Home

Carolyn Dyrud

WMF

Norman Danielson

Josie Hilleren

Cecil Schmidt

Vision

Gilman Johnson

Lucille Thundercloud (2)

World Missions

Solveig Hays

Gladys Huffman

Marcella Wright

Cecil Schmidt

Tony Zurawski

... in honor of

Miriam Infant Home

Larry Martz

AFLTS internship assignments given

Internship assignments were announced for three of the four senior students at the Free Lutheran Seminary. The 12-month assignments begin at the end of the school year.

Senior Kirk Flaa and his family have been assigned to Fox River Lutheran Church, Sheridan, Ill., under the leadership of Pastor Kevin Garner.

Senior Kirk Thorson and his

family have been assigned to Bethel Free Lutheran, Minot, N.D., under the direction of Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck.

Senior Nick Dyrud and his family have been assigned to Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., under the direction of Pastor Michael Brandt.

Senior Shane McLoughlin has yet to receive his assignment.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (2 months) – January 1 - February 28, 2006

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$325,700	\$24,955	\$55,368	17
Youth Ministries . . .	57,949	4,353	9,017	16
Evangelism	98,330	6,146	10,846	11
Parish Education . . .	96,477	5,318	17,982	19
Seminary	189,224	13,423	26,845	14
Bible School	296,257	21,029	41,281	14
Home Missions	293,287	13,049	31,042	11
World Missions	260,933	12,126	35,076	13
Personal Support . . .	376,641	30,683	65,252	17
TOTALS	\$1,994,798	\$131,081	\$292,709	15
TOTALS 2005	\$1,860,474	\$128,597	\$293,674	16

Goal 17%

These are the Annual Conference-approved budgets but do not reflect all the financial needs of the departments. Contact the individual departments for further information.

The path of the **Cross**

[Editorial]

Don't you want me to be happy?" That's a popular line to use when somebody questions the wisdom of your actions and suggests you ought to do something different. "But this makes me happy. You ought to be happy with me."

That might sound like a convincing argument and a way to end the discussion, but it's not a biblical approach to life.



Craig Johnson

For many, happiness is their chief goal. They do whatever puts a smile on their face. For ones with that kind of thinking the cross is

awfully confusing.

Jesus didn't pursue momentary happiness. He endured the cross with "the joy set before him" in view (Hebrews 12:2, NIV). That joy was "before him," but in His immediate view was intense pain and suffering. It was anything but happiness. He asked the Father to "take this cup from me." "His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:42, 44). Still He chose the cross because it was the necessary and right thing to do.

We are often given a cross to bear and sufferings to endure. Jesus is very upfront and honest with us about that. He said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24-25). He doesn't lead us to believe following Him will be a walk on easy street. On the con-

trary He says, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Pursuing happiness rather than the path of the cross is a grave mistake. It can lead us to do things that bring momentary pleasure but long-term trouble. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 16:25).

In Hebrews 11:25 we are told that Moses "chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time." He didn't just seek temporary happiness. He sought to do what was in accord with God's will and would best serve the Lord and others.

A lady feeds her elderly sister lunch each day at a care center not because it is fun but because it is needed service. Young people choose to not engage in sexual behavior outside of marriage, denying themselves "the pleasures of sin for a short time," because they would rather have the enduring joy that God offers.

Asking what will make us happy rather than what is right can result in us missing out on what is best. Growth often happens during times of trial. True joy and fullness of life are found on the path of the cross. "We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3). "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (I Peter 4:13).

Instead of just seeking what

True joy and fullness of life are found on the path of the cross.

would make him happy at the moment, the Apostle Paul wanted "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:10). He chose the path of the cross.

We choose the path of the cross, even though it may not be the path to momentary happiness. We choose it because of God's promise that He will walk the path with us. In his book, *Disappointment with God*, Philip Yancey writes, "We can never fully plumb the mystery of what took place on the cross, but it does offer the consolation that God is unwilling to put his creatures through any test that he himself has not endured. ... Good Friday demonstrates that God has not abandoned us to our pain. The evils and sufferings that afflict our lives are so real and so significant to God that he willed to share them and endure them himself."

The path of the cross may not lead to immediate pleasure but it is the path that Jesus is on. And that is always the best place to be.

[ARC]

Free *indeed*

The theme verse for the AFLC camps at the ARC for 2006 is John 8:36: "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." I am a recent convert to Christ (1997), and the bondage of life without Christ is still fresh in my mind. All the trappings of this world had a part in keeping me from Christ. Only through the prayers and love of my wife and others were the calluses removed from my eyes and Christ allowed in my life. I was freed from worldly temptations. Through God's grace I died to sin, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ in me (Galatians 2:20).

Christ's resurrection story is not complex. The stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty. Even though I attended church all of my life (at least on Christmas and Easter), it took some 30-odd years of hearing this story before my eyes could see and my ears could hear the only good news there really is — the tomb was empty. Empty because He is alive!

Many of our churches are filled at Easter with people who are lost in the world. They visit church once or twice a year, or perhaps attend regularly without ever knowing they can have a personal relationship with God. Many don't have loving friends praying for them. Can we expect this Easter season to be different? What are we doing about it? Are we in a comfortable zone, or are we willing to step out and make a difference?

With freedom comes a great measure of responsibility. Jesus tells us many times, "Go forth." Go into cities.

Go into villages. "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). What are those of us who are "free indeed" doing for these souls destined for an eternity in hell? Are we hoping this year they'll hear? Are we getting to know them, befriending them, and letting Jesus' light shine through us to them? Are we praying for them? Cooking meals for them? Giving our coats to them? Are we telling them about Jesus and the grace and the freedom that only He can give?

“
Oh Lord, the unmeasured grace you give
To a dirt-filled wretched man like me
My just reward you've chosen not to see
But only Jesus, to whom I bend my knee
Allow me a life that indeed is Free
”

At the Side-by-Side Bible camp at the ARC this winter we witnessed the total transformation of a young lady who accepted Jesus' offer of freedom. The physical transformation overnight mirrored the change in her heart, and it was remarkable! It happened only because someone followed Jesus' commands

and bathed a lost soul with prayer and love.

From Jesus' words in Matthew 5:46-47: "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others?" Let's make a commitment before God and each other to step out of our comfort zone this Easter. Pray for boldness. Let's love the lost and let the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ work in them so that they, also, may be "free indeed."

— Pat Flanders
Director, Association Retreat Center