



[Encouraging Word] The Faithful One

here is something utterly transforming about casting the future into God's hands. My problem is letting go. Future uncertainty, present fears and unfulfilled longings constantly reveal my need to trust God beyond what my eyes can see. I chime right in there with the rest of the disciples when they be sought Jesus in Luke 17:5, "Lord, increase our faith." I'm awed that it is His continual delight, not a frustration, to evermore reveal His promises without flaw.

Frequently, I give a worry, fear, or dream regarding my future to God, and then get frustrated when it keeps coming back to my mind. "What's wrong with me; where is my faith?" I wonder. "I thought I yielded this matter to God five minutes ago."

God is teaching me that faith is rarely pinpointed to a specific point in time that yields me so completely at rest that my own preferences or fears are permanently annihilated. Quite frequently struggle remains. There is great comfort in realizing that the Father doesn't require us to be numb to all emotion before we can say we trust Him. Faith is spreading out all my plans and uncertainties, hopes and fears, acknowledging them honestly before God, and then saying, "But not my will, Thy will be done."

As often as our fears return, we have the privilege of bringing them before the Lord, a new gift and a living sacrifice. Trusting our life into the Father's hands is continuous, day-by-day, and moment-by-moment.

Leafing through my journal, I find that there is another thing about faith that God

has been pointing me to in recent months. Faith rests in knowing that God is bigger than my imperfect attempts to do His perfect will. Isaiah 49:15 says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

A little baby depends on maternal love for nourishment. He can no more feed, change, and care for self than I can possess any form of spiritual strength by striving and straining after faith. Strength and rest come through child-like looking to the Faithful One for everything we need. Faith puts Christ pre-eminent, and rests in His work to make things work out, not mine. He is faithful, even when our own faith is feeble. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (I Thessalonians 5:24).

The days ahead are certain to hold pain, struggle, and tears; by faith, though, we need not fear it. "How calmly we may commit our lives to the hands of Him who bears up the world," said Charles Spurgeon. What an awesome picture to carry into this new year. His design for your life and mine in 2005 includes plans far richer than you and I dare imagine.

No matter how many times I've heard it in the past, I'm grateful to be reminded that He knows all about the details of coming months. He sees all the circumstances and He has a plan. He is the Faithful One.

> Christie Ballmann Word of Truth Free Lutheran Glen Rose, Texas

January 2005 Volume 43, Number 1

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[Sound Bites]

I've talked to many women who say to me, "Please tell the truth to the women of the church. Abortion is not a quick fix. What accompanies the 'quick fix' may very well be a lifetime of regret."

> — Bill Hybels "One Church's Answer to Abortion"

Since when does anyone's right to live depend upon someone else wanting them? Killing the unwanted is a monstrous evil ... The pivotal question is, should any civilized nation give to one citizen the absolute right to kill another to solve that first person's personal problem?

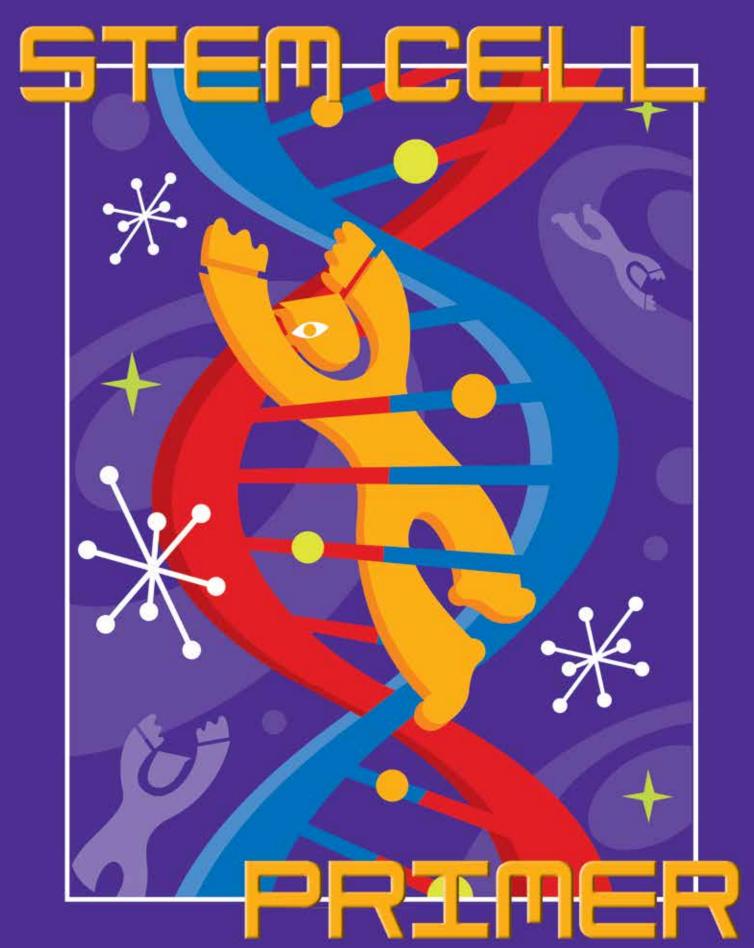
- Dr. John Willke

Ninety-five-plus percent of children killed by abortion are killed for reasons of convenience; not incest, not rape, not the physical condition of the unborn, and not the threatened health of the mother.

> Charles Swindoll "Sanctity of Life"

Although it took William Wilberforce most of his adult life to make slavery unfashionable in England, it was accomplished. Abortion, too, can become unfashionable!

Linda D. Bartlett





alifornia voted to spend \$3 billion on it. Movie stars promote it. Major news publications have covered it extensively. We are talking about stem cell research. With all the hype and divergent opinions

offered, what stand should a Christian take on this issue? We can answer that question relatively easily when we understand some basics about this controversial medical process.

WHEN LIFE BEGINS

The question of when life begins is a scientific question. The scientists most qualified to answer are embryologists. They concur that life begins when the genetic material of egg and sperm join at conception. Medical schools teach this in their embryology textbooks.

Scripture affirms this scientific truth. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5 NIV). Since we are sinful from the moment of conception, we must be human beings from that very same moment. This is precisely why Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit." He had to pass through all stages of human development to redeem us from our sinful human nature.

EMBRYONIC CELLS

What we hear so much about in the media is *embryonic* stem cell research (ESCR). Embryonic stem cells are derived from a human embryo at about five days after conception. At this stage, the human being is a hallow ball with a thin outside layer only a single cell thick. Once the embryo reaches the uterus, this layer forms the placenta. Inside this hallow ball is a cluster of cells. These cells will soon begin to differentiate into the various tissues — nerve, muscle, skin, etc. — that make up the human body. Each of these cells, then, has the potential to become any tissue in the

body. These are the "stem cells" that researchers want to use in an effort to treat disease. However, a five-day-old human being must be destroyed in order to obtain these stem cells.

Thus the Christian must oppose ESCR because it violates God's fifth commandment against the taking of human life. The potential of future cures for human beings cannot justify the destruction of human beings. ESCR also violates the "helping and befriending" aspect of the sixth commandment. Since life begins at conception, that new person is our neighbor from that moment. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

OTHER STEM CELLS

Christians do not have to oppose all forms of stem cell research, however. There is no need to destroy an embryo to obtain stem cells. "Adult" stem cells are found in a variety of tissues in our bodies. Umbilical cord blood is another rich source of stem cells.

Proponents of embryonic stem cell research have downplayed adult stem cells because they do not normally have the capability of becoming any tissue type, as do embryonic stem cells. However, recent studies are showing that they do. Bone marrow adult stem cells, for example, have shown the ability to become virtually every other cell type. A variety of diseases in human beings are already being treated with adult stem cells, whereas there are no diseases currently being treated with embryonic stem cells. Christians can support adult stem cell research.

CROSS THEOLOGY

No one would deny the heartache and struggle of having an incurable, chronic disease. It is devastating for the individual and the family. It is understandable that the strong desire for a cure may lead to placing trust and

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WORKING DIRECTLY WITH THE DECISION MAKERS



EBBIE KORSMO



ife is precious. I know this. I have three kids. I have felt them kick and watched them before they were born. I knew they were more than just a

"Love must be

sincere. Hate what

is evil; cling to what

is good. Be devoted

to one another in

brotherly love.

Honor one another

above yourselves. ...

Share with God's

people who are in

need. Practice

hospitality"

(Romans 12:9-13).

part of me. At conception, God gave them lives of their own. My job was to harbor and protect that life for nine months in my womb, and then welcome them into my arms.

I knew life was precious before I had children. But I just knew it — I didn't do anything about it until the director from a local pregnancy center spoke at our church and moved me to do something!

Some people picket abortion clinics, some people campaign for pro-life politicians, some people talk about abortion. I work directly with the people who ultimately make the final decision about abortion — women. Women who need to hear the facts about life, abortion, and God's love. I do it because God kicked me out of my comfort zone.

I have been a volunteer counselor at the Women's Pregnancy Center in Grand Forks, N.D., for about four years. We give free pregnancy tests to women who might be facing a

crisis pregnancy. If they are not pregnant, we discuss abstinence. We discuss all the possible options with a woman whose test is positive. We tell her about adoption. We let her know that we will help out with her physical needs if she chooses to be a parent. We tell her things abortions clinics won't, like how abortion raises breast cancer risk, the suicide rate, and drug and alcohol abuse. We show her exactly what is inside her body so she knows her fetus has a heart beat, brain waves, fingers and toes, and is most definitely human and alive.

We also share the love of Christ with her. We let her know that there is a God who loves her and wants to forgive her. Every woman receives a Christian tract inviting salvation. If she allows, we contact her once a month to offer our support and friendship. We help out with physical needs like diapers, clothing, cribs, high chairs, etc. We share with God's people who are in need. We practice hospitality. We serve Him by serving her.

More than 46 million babies are aborted worldwide, and about one million in the United States every year.² More than 1,200 babies were aborted in North Dakota in 2001.³ Since 1987, we are aware of more than 160 babies who have been saved from

abortion by the work of the Women's Pregnancy Center.⁴ It doesn't sound like many. But there are pregnancy centers all over this country saving one baby at a time. Those numbers add up, but sadly still more babies are killed by abortion.

The pro-life movement is afflicted. But we are called to be patient in affliction, faithful in prayer and joyful in the hope that God is in control. We are not to give up. One baby matters intimately and infinitely if you are that baby's parent, adoptive parent, or that child yourself.

And each one matters to me. Sometimes we never find out what a woman does

after she's been to the center. Sometimes women bless us by visiting us with their new babies. One young woman came in with her boyfriend looking for RU-486, a drug recently approved by the FDA used to abort life up to nine weeks after a pregnancy begins. She was a senior in high school with all these big dreams, which didn't include a baby. I explained to her that she was too far along for RU-486, but she was determined that she needed an abortion. She left the center, not giving me permission to contact her, and I never heard from her again. For months I thought about her, prayed for her and her

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MEDICAL



THE SEARCH FOR GOD'S TRUTH



BY DR. PETER DYRUD



s time ticks on in this 21st century, it seems life is progressively becoming more complicated. All technology seems to be advancing at an alarming rate — medical

technology being no exception. With the growing complexities of life and the challenges of issues relating to protecting, improving, and prolonging of life, moral and ethical decisions must and are being made daily. Bioethics has become a relatively new discipline in our universities, and now virtually every hospital has a medical or bioethics committee.

When I was asked to write about the ethical issues in the field of cardio thoracic surgery, other more popular and controversial topics came to mind, such as stem cell research, cloning, and genetic engineering. But a much more common dilemma is knowing how aggressively to treat seemingly hopeless illnesses such as certain cancers or heart and lung conditions, or when to withdraw life support in the form of ventilators or feeding tubes in comatose patients.

Until several decades ago, physicians were counted on and, in a paternalistic manner, made most of those decisions for the patient. However, after several landmark court cases such as the Karen Ann Quinlan and Nancy Cruzan cases and the Patient Self-Determination Act of 1990 leading to patient autonomy and advanced directives, physicians have, thankfully, been relieved of the sole burden of decision making.

On a more personal level, when my father was offered and recommended to undergo coronary artery bypass surgery in 1987, I sensed some initial reluctance on his part due to what I thought might be his questioning of whether man should be "tampering" with his heart. Our deepest and most personal emotions seem rooted in and associated with the heart. In the spiritual sense, I believe God considers our soul to be our inmost being. As a physician, I have to relate to the heart as an organ of the body, which, if diseased in a manner that can be improved upon or cured, should be. God has given my father, Pastor Amos Dyrud, many more wonderful years for which I am truly grateful.

Organ transplantation is another issue posing various ethical dilemmas. With the shortage of donors, patients must be placed on waiting lists to receive a heart and/or lung transplant. Patients are, for the most part, prioritized. But there are examples of wealth and status influ-

encing decision-making. Should patients whose need for an organ come because of self-destructive habits or behavior be denied? Should a person's age or deemed "value" to society be issues that merit consideration?

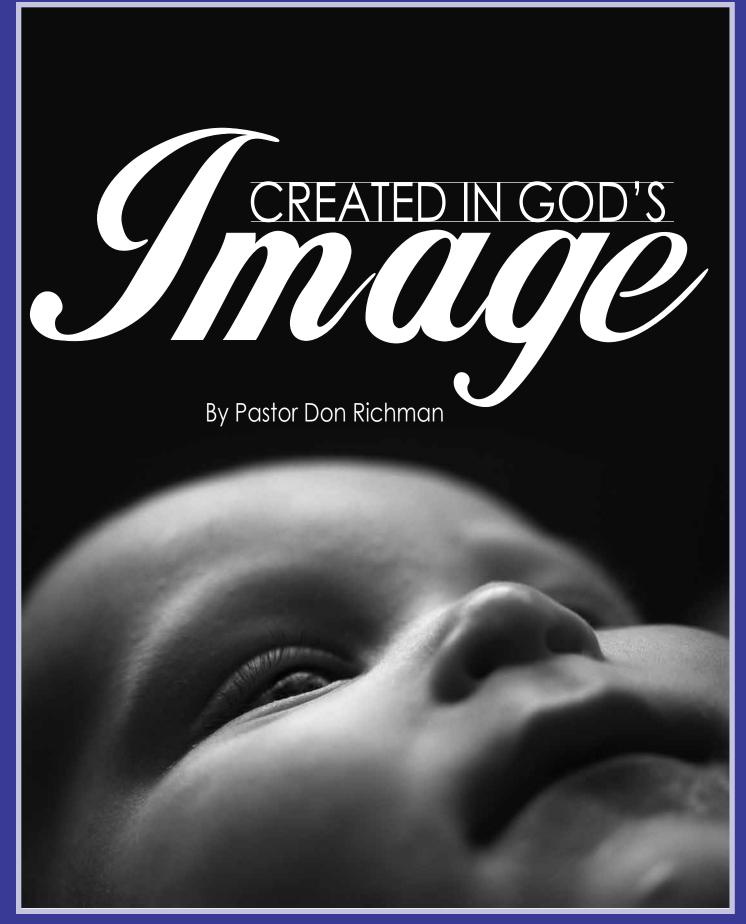
Because of organ donor shortages, millions of dollars are spent for research in developing assist devices to augment the function of failing hearts and also for complete artificial hearts for replacement. Overcoming the problems of infection and clotting associated with these devices remain major challenges. Some may question whether man and science are meddling too much in the "affairs of God." God has so wonderfully blessed man with various talents, abilities and creativity. But we must humbly remember that only God has the ability to create in the strictest sense of the word, meaning to create something out of nothing.

A surgical colleague of mine who just recently lost his dear wife in a tragic accident derived some comfort in knowing that her multiple organ donations will be helping to extend the lives of several individuals. Many people today are benefiting from the medical science of organ transplantation.

Surgeons, I think, are by nature eternal optimists. They try to project some degree of hope and have a difficult time throwing in the towel and admitting defeat. This is especially the case in situations where after a serious surgical procedure and a long post-operative course, the patient still does not survive. Several multi-specialty care conferences with the patient's family were no doubt held and a course of action decided upon. The patient, in most instances, has been upheld in prayer. Even secular medical journals are now reporting on the value of prayer in illness. As Christians, we have always realized that and find great comfort knowing that our ill loved one is in God's hands. As a Christian physician, I can rest comfortably, knowing that death may have been in God's will in that death is inevitable for all of us.

We find comfort also as we claim Jesus' promise to Martha in John 11:25-26: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Dyrud is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.





ankind has in many ways disregarded or rejected the biblical teaching of life. Instead, the ethic of "convenience" controls decision-making processes, cheapening

life. This ethic proposes that if it is not convenient to have your baby, you are free to have him or her killed.

But Scripture condemns the shedding of innocent blood. The fifth commandment, "You shall not murder," makes it abundantly clear. It applies to the unborn and born. How do we know this?

Christians have always believed we are created in God's image. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." God creates parsen

them." God creates personhood at the moment of conception. The Hebrew word for an unborn child is yeled (Exodus 21:22-25). The same word is used to describe both an unborn and an older child. Job refers to himself as a person (not a thing) in the womb whom God was molding like clay (Job 10:8-12). In Psalm 139:13-16 David describes how God knit him together in his mother's womb. "I will give thanks to you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (vs. 14). David

exclaims that he is a wonderful handiwork of God at every step of development.

When the Jews imitated the pagans around them and practiced child sacrifice, they were very strongly condemned. Psalm 106:35-38 describes the consequences of such actions, "But they mingled with the nations and adopted their customs. ... They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons. They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was desecrated by their blood."

In the New Testament, the word often used for baby, *brephos*, is used to describe both an unborn and an older child in the story of John leaping in the womb of Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-44). In Luke 1:31 the angel told Mary she would be "with child." In other words, the unborn baby is a little human being, a person who requires love,

protection, honor and respect.

After Jesus' ministry on earth, the early Church was planted in a pagan society where life was cheap, unwanted babies were abandoned and left in forests for wild animals. But Christians understood and honored the sanctity of human life. They gathered these children to themselves, and loved and cared for them.

Church fathers, from both the early Church and up through history, have spoken strongly against abortion. The Didache, believed to be a catechism for new converts in the early Church, states, "Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant." Martin Luther and John Calvin stood strongly against abortion. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a theologian who was martyred by the Nazis, argued that abortion is "nothing but

murder."

And today Christians

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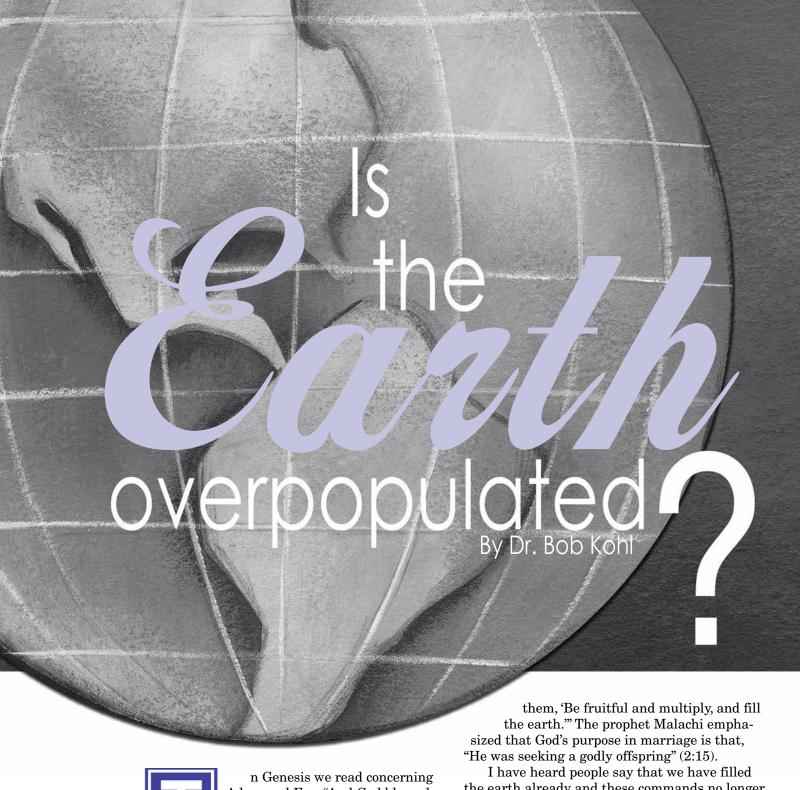
And today Christians are at the forefront of the battle to protect mothers and their unborn babies from abortion. I know, because I have seen the struggle with my own eyes.

The Ingrian Lutheran Church in Russia recently invited the East European Missions Network to sponsor a Sanctity of Life conference. The purpose of the conference was to present biblical teaching in a way that would affirm mothers and fathers

in their high callings, encourage them to love and protect their unborn children and enable them to resist the strong, pro-abortion culture of death that reigns in Russia.

At the conference, we learned just how strong that culture is. In Russia, two out of every three babies are killed. Russian women have an average of 8 to 12 abortions. We were told that when a young mother visits her doctor to joyously tell him she is expecting a baby, his first question is usually, "When can I schedule your abortion?" If she tells a friend she is pregnant, the friend, influenced by the guilt of her own abortions, will ask, "You are certainly going to go for 'the break' aren't you?" If she says she will keep her baby, the friend will respond, "Who do you think you are to have your baby? Do you think you are better than we are?"

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Adam and Eve: "And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). As I search

the Scriptures, I do not find any references to God rescinding His command to have children and to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). This command was repeated again in Genesis 9:1, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to the earth already and these commands no longer apply. On what basis of fact do they make this statement? God is infinite. He created mankind to have fellowship with Him, to walk with Him. He promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?" or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?'

For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

Satan has been spreading his lies that we are selfish to have more than one or two children. He wants to limit God's blessings. He uses lies such as: "We must preserve the environment," or, "Too many people will destroy our planet." He uses the lies, "There is not enough food to go around," or, "We are using up irreplaceable resources."

For a number of years I have taught a course at our university titled, "World Crop and Soil Resources." A careful study of even secular liter-

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ature demonstrates that we could feed twice the current population with today's technology. If food is getting scarce why aren't grain prices going up?

Actually, The Institute for Food and Development Policy in the first issue of "Food First" (1994) pointed to political decisions and wars as the cause of hunger and not a lack of production capacity. But these are the stories that are not told by the news media.

For instance, the news media focused a lot of attention on the famine in Ethio-

pia in the 1980s without saying anything about its political cause. With this attention America sent considerable food aid, only to see much of it rot on the docks. But what was the truth? A dear friend of mine was in Ethiopia at the time and received financial aid from Lutheran World Relief. With this money he was buying food in Ethiopia and trucking it north to the famine area. However, all movement was done at night and without lights or the military planes would strafe them. The government was using food as a weapon against the people of the northern areas of Ethiopia who were resisting the communistic government.

We find it hard to visualize how many people there are in the world. If Minnesota's Twin Cities metro area was one parking lot, all of the world's 6 billion people could fit comfortably standing on it. The most densely populated nation in Europe — besides city-states — is the Netherlands (Holland). Yet it is often the third largest agricultural exporter in the world on returns from products sold. How so? By being good stewards of the resources God has provided. This is just one small example of what can be done with present technology.

In addition, the most recent United Nations Population report from 2001 showed drastic drops in the number of children born per woman per lifetime around the world. Many countries are already below 2.14, the number estimated to maintain a stable population. A projection of their data indicates that the average for the whole world is about 2.14 in 2005. The worry in

some publications is depopulation.

Those in charge of the UN population projects are worried about depopulation. In 2002 they were wondering if the drop in the world fertility rate could be stopped at 1.85, meaning a world with only half our current population by 2150. I have read that the continued collapse of fertility is set to become the dominant demographic feature of the 21st century.

Suffice it to say that all the secular arguments for limiting family size can be refuted with secular information.

But we must not allow secular propaganda and social pressure to influence our thinking regarding family size. We must always look to God's Word to guide all of life's decisions.

God is our Lord and the One before whom we must give an account, not man. Look for His blessings. "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate" (Psalm 127:3-5).

Kohl, a member of the World Missions Committee, is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Arlington, S.D.

EEMN, from page 11

One mother told us that she had to hide from her doctor when she was pregnant so he couldn't force her to abort her babies. She also told us of a handicapped couple who were not supposed to have a child. They resisted the pressure of doctor, family and friends to have their baby killed, and the child was born

As an outcome of this first conference several people plan to organize mini pro-life conferences in congregations, among students and in other venues.

In November we helped organize two other Sanctity of Life conferences in Latvia. One of the pastors with whom we worked related that his mother had had 11 abortions before he was born. Understandably, he is very strongly pro-

life and has asked us to do a conference in his hometown next year.

Many of the women who attended the conference in Latvia have had abortions. When the realization that they had their own babies killed finally comes to the surface, the guilt, shame, regret and pain is often unbearable. They feel like they can never undo the terrible disaster they have caused. Where can they turn?

There is only one place to turn. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And He took them in his arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them" (Matthew 19:14). Jesus now invites those laden with the guilt and shame of killing one of those little ones to come meet Him at the foot of the cross. Jesus suffered and died, taking *all* our

sins upon Himself. He will take the sin of abortion and murder, because the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin (I John 1:7). "And He who knew no sin became sin that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (II Corinthians 5:21). And, remarkably, once that sin is put on the cross, the Lord assures us, "I will remember their sins no more" Hebrews 8:12b.

Thank God for the beauty of unborn and already born children. Truly, life is precious.

Richman is founding director of Eastern Europe Mission Network. If you would like to pray for and support the Sanctity of Life ministry in Eastern Europe and Russia, please contact EEMN at 9072 Lyndale Ave. South, Suite 165, Bloomington, MN 55420 or email eemn@usfamily.net.

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baby, and felt like a failure. I was overjoyed to tears when I read in the paper that she had given birth to a baby boy!

Another woman, who was 17 at the time, came in with her 9-month-old son, and the first words out of her mouth were, "How much does an abortion cost?" After watching a video about fetal development and abortion, she said, "I could never do that." Now an adoptive couple has a beautiful baby boy.

We don't always know what happens after a woman leaves here, but God does. We perform a much-needed service by helping women make an informed decision: one of the most important decisions she will make in her lifetime. I am privileged to serve God by trying to help these hurting women and save those most vulnerable in our society.

- ¹ Elliot Institute www.afterabortion.org
- ² Center for Bioethical Reform www.cbrinfo.org
- ³ Centers for Disease Control www.cdc.gov
- ⁴ Women's Pregnancy Center, Grand Forks North Dakota Statistics

Korsmo, an Alberta, Canada, native, lives with her husband, Mark, on a farm in eastern North Dakota. They have three children, Ty, 5, Siri, 3, and Rayne, 6 months. She volunteers at the Women's Pregnancy Center in Grand Forks, N.D., once a week.

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hope in things like ESCR. But in his explanation of the first commandment in the Large Catechism, Martin Luther states that trusting in the one true God means expecting "nothing but good from Him *especially* in distress and want." God has shown His love for us on the cross — not in the absence of disease. The cross also assures us that God can and does work through suffering to produce great good. The greatest suffering of all time — Christ suffering for the sins of the world — produced the greatest good of all time: the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of eternal life to all who believe.

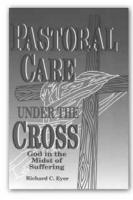
The advances in biotechnology can be seen as gifts that God has given to enhance and extend our lives. As with all gifts, however, we can use them in ways God did not intend. God does not intend that we destroy tiny human beings in order to help human beings. God is opening doors for research using stem cells from sources other than human embryos. These we may and should pursue for the betterment of God's wonderful gift of life.

Rev. Lamb is executive director of National Lutherans For Life. For more information, Lutherans For Life has brochures on stem cell research, cloning, and related issues. Call (888) 364-5433.

[Parish Education] Caring for others in life and death

Pastoral Care Under the Cross

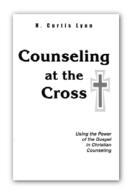
The elderly, AIDS patients, the dying, mourners, the mentally ill, the depressed. Many of you may regularly come into contact with these people who are dealing with death and the struggles of life. This book, written by an experienced chaplain, helps pastors and lay people in ministering to these special



needs. The book also considers a Christian's response to medical-ethics questions including euthanasia. \$12

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Emotional difficulties, terminal illness, substance abuse, marital conflict, depression, physical disorders, anger, anxiety, and guilt. In all of these struggles, the Christian is to direct others to Christ for hope and peace that only He can provide. This book uses various case studies to help pastors and counselors apply the law and the geometric situation.



the gospel to specific situations in relevant and appropriate ways. \$15.50

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Each of the four books in this series contains 25 devotions with a comforting Scripture text, encouraging message, and helpful prayer. *\$5 each*

God's Children Never Die

Words of Comfort as I Face the End of My Life

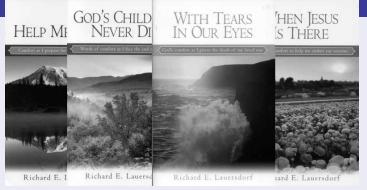
At different stages in our lives, we may react to the thought of death in different ways. No matter what our thoughts of death may be at the moment, God comes to us in His Word to embrace us with His promises.

Help Me, Lord

Comfort As I Prepare for My Loved One's Death How can we accept the death of someone we love and go on living without them? Written especially for those who are flooded with questions and emotions as a loved one nears death.

With Tears in Our Eyes

God's Comfort As I Grieve
Whether it was the result of a sudden accident



or a lingering illness, whether we had anticipated many more years together or had prayed that God would take our loved one soon, the death of a loved one brings profound grief. In the dark hours of grief, what a friend we have in Jesus!

When Jesus Is There

Comfort to Help Me Endure My Sorrows
Written especially for those who have experienced loss for a variety of reasons. Topics include child's serious illness, divorce, job loss, economic loss, loss of physical abilities, fear of losing faith. God's Word assures us in our times of loss, God has not forsaken us.

These and other resources available from **Ambassador Publications:** AFLC Parish Education, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone: (763) 545-5631. Fax: (763) 545-0079. Email: parished@aflc.org. Web site: www.aflc.org

[World Missions] Mexico

The reward Confidence

s I was meditating on the epistle lesson for the next sermon, the first couple of verses leaped out at me. "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36). On the mission field, God brings us people who are crawling out of generations of enslavement to sin. I have some people in my church today who are just slightly beyond that point. They need this message! And they need your prayers.

One lady who attends our church was orphaned at the age of 12 and has had to make her way since then by whatever means she could. She managed to get from Venezuela to California and eventually here to Mexico. She has three precious daughters, all out of wedlock, and currently lives in a house provided by a man to whom she is not married. He lives in Los Angeles, but when he comes to Mexico, he expects to be treated like a husband. If she leaves, she has no place to live and three daughters to feed. If she stays, she is living in sin. Although she has received Christ, she finds herself frightened and confused.

Another family, part of our church for years, is going through the terrible pain of the husband having had an affair. Now they are trying to deal with the consequences of that sin and put their lives back together. What can they do? Is there even any hope for this family?

One new Christian is a single father struggling to raise a teen-aged daughter. He has been an alcoholic and a drug addict for many years and at times feels desperate. Sometimes he feels hopeless and



defenseless against the onslaught of evil and temptations that come over this little family like a flood.

The answer for these struggling children of God is in this verse: Don't throw "away your confidence, which has great reward." This is what I want to tell people next Sunday: God will intervene and deliver you from your impossible situations! You can trust in Him, knowing that deliverance and the answer to your prayers is on the way. By faith in Jesus, you are free to do what you know is God's will, because eventually, before it's too late, you will receive what God has promised — a happy, stable home, a drugfree life, and the provision of everything needed for life, health, and happiness.

"I would have fainted unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 2714).

> Pastor Dan Giles Jerez, Mexico

Brazil's Miriam Infant Home

Fifteen years of serving

CHILDREN

n 1990 the Miriam Infant Home started out in a very humble manner. Much fear and prayer filled our hearts and lives as we undertook this new ministry. These last 15 years have been a special privilege for all of us in the AFLC as we've worked together to make a home for these little ones who did not ask to come into the world in such a way and then later became abandoned.

We've all been taught much through this ministry of compassion, as seen in James 1:27: "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

Let us take time to give thanks and praise to the Lord for these last 15 years. A special thanks to all of you co-laborers, who've faithfully supported this compassion ministry with your prayers, finances, boxes of clothing and supplies throughout the years. Thanks to you the short-term volunteer missionaries who've come to Brazil to work with the children in the home. Thanks to the faithful Brazilian leaders, workers and Bible school and seminary students who've labored, taught and prayed for these little ones.

This year, we'll be reminiscing in future articles about the children, sharing their life experiences, stories about the home, the workers and future plans.

Pastor Connely and Carolyn Dyrud
 Campo Mourao, Brazil

TOP: The Miriam Infant Home (right) is home to young children on the first floor and older children in the second floor.

MIDDLE: Two house mothers (middle and right) sit with short-term missionary Alicia Horneman, Marysville, Wash., and three children from the home.

BOTTOM: All of the children at the home play on a new playground set.



[Stewardship]

Seminary

Doorway to service

IN THE FALL OF 1972 I STOOD IN A DOORWAY THAT WOULD CHANGE MY LIFE.

During the previous year, as a high school senior, I had plans for my next step in education. When my father asked me what I wanted to do, I boldly responded, "I'm going to go to Temple University (Philadelphia, Pa.) to pursue a law degree." My father did not discourage me, but suggested that I first go to Bible school.

"Try it for one quarter," he said, "if you don't like it, come home." The school my father sug-

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

— II Timothy 3:16-17

gested was AFLBS.
Out of love and obedience I said yes, and
made plans to attend
AFLBS that fall.

While there I heard the Word of God every day. Though I grew up in a Christian home and believed in Christ, I had not spent much time studying the Bible, getting to know and love Jesus. In the fall quarter I listened to pastors proclaim the Word

hour after hour. God was working on me. I heard passages of Scripture that spoke to my heart. The message was, "Mark, do you love me? Feed my people. Go where I tell you to go. Feed my lambs. Serve me." I was not sure what was happening to me. There was no rest in my soul. After praying with our dean of men, Pastor Raynard Huglen, he suggested that I speak with the dean of the seminary.

The doorway that stood before me was the office of the dean of Free Lutheran Seminary, Pastor Amos Dyrud. He welcomed me to come and sit. He listened to my story. He heard me recall the several Bible passages that had touched me. He smiled and nodded. He then told his story. We read the Scriptures together. He prayed for me. He said, "Mark, God is calling

you to serve Him. Listen to His voice. Listen to the Word. Follow Jesus."

After leaving that office, I have never looked back. The Lord has opened many doors of ministry for me to serve Christ. As these 32 years have passed I have seen the mighty hand of God touch me and use me to his praise and glory. But this story is not about me, it is about how God speaks and desires to work through His children.

What is your story? Is God speaking to you? Is there a chair at AFLTS waiting for you? Are you seeking the Lord for direction? If God is calling: Pray. Search the Scriptures. Ask other believers to pray for you. Speak with your pastor. Take in an interterm class at the seminary. Speak with our dean, Dr. Francis Monseth.

What can the church do? God may not be calling you to full-time ministry, but He is calling you to get involved in the work of AFLTS.

Pray for laborers (Matthew 9:37-38).

Pray for another full-time teacher.

Give financially to the seminary. Your gifts will help support our teachers and provide for critical needs.

Give to the seminary student financial aid program.

Pray about the timing, planning and finances for a second seminary-housing unit.

Pray for the seminary's 27 full- and parttime students, including those on internship.

Pray for the families of our teachers and students.

Ask your congregation to consider AFLTS as a part of your annual budget.

Jesus Christ is the answer for any question you may have today. Praise God, He continues to speak to us through his Word. He still calls laborers into His harvest. God is faithful. He will meet the needs of His Church. Will you let Him use you?

> Pastor Mark Antal Park River, N.D, AFLC Stewardship Board



Care enough to mentor

omen today live in various types of bondage. God hears the cries of their hearts and yearns to fill the emptiness in their souls. He has heard their cries of loneliness ... of fearfulness ... of hopelessness. Thankfully, the Lord gave His only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to free them from bondage and lead them

back to abundant life, the life of purpose ... of peace ... of hope.

In Bible times, women were deceived — like Eve in the garden, who was tempted to eat the one fruit that the Lord withheld. Or consider Lot's wife who longed for Sodom and Gomorrah when the Lord was offering safety and deliverance. Countless women throughout history need the help of another woman who willingly gives time for friendship and who will sincerely speak the truth.

Like Eve and Lot's wife, today's women of all ages continue to be deceived by bondage that disguises itself as liberation — liberation that opposes God's chosen liberator, our Lord Jesus. Jesus showed us through His life, death, and resurrection that He is God's way of deliverance. Sadly, women are being deceived by alternatives that promise liberation. They are disguised as physical beauty, financial prosperity, freedom to "choose," a new and bigger house, illicit sexual relationships, or a luxurious retirement.

That ancient enemy, the devil, is trying to lure women away from the Savior who offers true deliverance and liberation. Tragically, the statistics on abortion, child abuse, homosexuality, adultery, alcoholism, divorce, and drug abuse among women of every age give witness to the effectiveness of the enemy's tactics. Women with these experiences and scarred emotions need other women who extend a heart of compassion, while offering accountability. Women need to minister to women to point them to the love and forgive-

Make plans to have a WMF "LINK UP" mentoring seminar in your area. Learn to mentor and how to begin a mentoring program in your church. "LINK UP" is written by Beth Bergren. Phone WMF President Cheryl Skordahl at (763)497-5863 or send a letter to 223 Cherrywood Ave. NW, St. Michael, MN 55376 or E-mail: wmf@aflc.org

ness of our Lord through the Word. With the Bible as our primary source in mentoring relationships, we will join God where He is already working in the lives of women today.

The Bible commands mentorship when Paul tells Titus: "... teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:3-5).

> - Cheryl Skordahl WMF National President

Sioux Falls congregation purchases land for church

Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., is pleased to announce the signing of a purchase agreement on 10 acres of land at the corner of 85th Street and Kiwanis Avenue. The congregation plans to build a facility on the newly acquired property as soon as finances and construction of city services allow. The congregation is seeking an interim location near the property to conduct worship services beginning in the fall. Living Word currently meets Sunday mornings at JFK Elementary, with midweek opportunities held across Sioux Falls.

Founded in 2002 by members of Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Living Word is served by Pastor Wade Mobley.



LOOKING AHEAD

FLY 2005

DATES July 4-9

THEME Rescue

VERSE Colossians 1:13-14

Estes Park, Colo. SITE

Every two years, youths in the AFLC gather for a week of teaching, fun and worship at the YMCA of the Rockies. Special speakers this year include Pam Stenzel and illusionist Toby Travis. For registration information, visit www.aflc.org/youth.

Have you ever thought about visiting our missionaries in Brazil, but just never had an opportunity? Maybe you worked there full- or short-term and would like to go back. Here's your chance. Plans are under way to help celebrate 40 years of AFLC mission work in Brazil next January. Contact Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt for more information: (608) 781-5821.

BRAZIL 2006

January 17-24 DATES

Forty Years Under **THEME** the Southern Cross

Brazil's mission fields STTE

Approximately \$1,500 COST

New members were recently received at Lutheran Church of Hope, Loveland, Colo. Pictured are, from left, David and Jodi VanCuren, Alaina, Gloria and David Bongers, and Nevis Glascow.



New members were recently received at Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., including Jeff, Kirsten, Evan, Sam and Malea Bates; David Michelle, Payton and McKenzie Brown; Doyle, Wendy, Alex, Jordan and Josie Fevig; Gordon and Karen Fevig; Ron, Ruth (not pictured), and Andrew Larson; Sharon Larson, David Evans and Ken Sivertson (not pictured). Standing with the new members is Pastor Dale Finstrom, at right.



AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee (left) installed Pastor Jerome Nikunen (center) at Zoar Free Lutheran, Hatton, N.D., on Nov. 7, 2004. Nikunen was also installed as chaplain of Tri-County Nursing and Retirement Homes by Chaplain John Rieth (right).

Dahle biography available through Mercy and Truth

Mercy and Truth Publishing has recently published "A Pioneer Church Family." The biography centers on the ministry of the Dahle family and the history of the early days of the Lutheran Free Church and the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Written by Pastor Trygve Dahle, the book sells for \$15 and will be available at the AFLC Pastors Conference in January at the ARC. Or write to Mercy and Truth Publishers, 19594 350th Street NW, Newfolden, MN 56738-9286.

[ABCDEFG]

What does it mean?

AFLC: The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, a fellowship of independent congregations, who have chosen to be interdependent for the purpose of accomplishing service in the Kingdom of God that cannot best be done alone. Founded in 1962 with headquarters at Plymouth, Minn

AFLBS: The Association Free Lutheran Bible School, a two-year Bible school founded in 1966 by the AFLC with campus located in Plymouth. Minn

AFLTS: The Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary sometimes called the Free Lutheran Seminary (FLS). Founded in 1964, shares campus with AFLBS in Plymouth, Minn.

MTI: The Ministry Training Institute is the thirdyear of studies at AFLBS, specifically designed to train students who desire to become full-time Christian workers, whether as missionaries, youth-work, or aviation ministry. The MTI program began in 2000.

WMF: The Women's Missionary Federation was organized in 1962 and supports AFLC missionary endeavors.

People and Places

Judy Johnson, mayor of Plymouth, Minn., is the newly elected president of the League of Minnesota Cities. Johnson, a member of Vision of Glory congregation, Plymouth, will be traveling around the state during the coming months to attend regional meetings, and will be spending a lot of time in St. Paul when the legislature convenes.

Dr. Gene Edward Veith, professor of English at Concordia University, Mequon, Wis., author and regular columnist for "World" magazine, will be the keynote speaker at the annual AFLC Pastors and Wives Retreat, Jan. 18-20, at the ARC, Osceola, Wis.

Pastor J. Christian Andrews, Palmdale, Calif., was installed by AFLC Vice-President Elden Nelson as part-time pastor of Evergreen Lutheran Church (independent), Phelan, Calif., on Nov. 14, 2004. Shepherd of the Valley, the AFLC congregation at Palmdale that has been served by Pastor Andrews, is no longer meeting for worship.

Pastor Mark Herringshaw has resigned as pastor of Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn. He will complete his duties on Jan. 31 and looks forward to a ministry serving people outside of a traditional church setting.

Members of the Coordinating Committee received a resolution of affiliation from **St. Paul Lutheran,** Gifford, Ill. Formerly an ELCA congregation, the 600-member church was organized in 1906.

Two new congregations were welcomed by the AFLC-Canada: **Bethany Lutheran**, rural Parkbeg, Saskatchewan, and **Chaplin Lutheran** of Chaplin, Saskatchewan. **Lay Pastor Marvin Seaborg** has accepted a call to serve both congregations.

The AFLC-Canada's Annual Conference has been schedule for April 1-3 at Bethel Lutheran, Elbow, Saskatchewan. The AFLC's Evangelism Commission will host a "Passing the Baton" seminar, with special speakers AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee, AFLTS Dean Dr. Francis Monseth, Home Missions Director Pastor Paul Nash, and Evangelism Director Pastor Jim Rasmussen.

AFLC memorials — November

AFLBS

Sonia Franze, Bev Kittleson, Delbert Scott, Arnold Honl, Steve Jacobson, Cora Antal, Sandra Tofsrud

AFLTS

Eugene Rochau

Evangelism

Janet Novak

Home Missions

Jan Fatland, Laurence Slinger

Parish Education

Thorvald Lee, Lester Mickelsen

Vision 2004

Ivan Nordheim, Edna Brend,

Art Berge

WMF

Sonia Franze, Myrtle Jensen, Phyllis Demaris

World Missions

Esther Chase, Dora Dalager, Ida Halverson, Irene Zahl

Youth Ministries

Sonia Franze

... in honor of

Home Missions

Pastor Paul Nash

Vision 2004

Mary Nash

Seminary classes in India

Pastors Martin Horn, Al Pinno and Connely Dyrud will travel to Chirala, India, Feb. 6-20 to teach the first segment of a six-year extension seminary program. Horn, who serves Emmanuel Lutheran and Hauge Lutheran in Kenyon, Minn., will teach a course on Romans and Galatians. Pinno, a clergy-at-large in Cana-

da, will teach a class on studies in the Gospels. And Dyrud, missionary to Brazil now on furlough, will teach a class on introduction to preaching and a class on doctrine.

For more information or to support this project financially, please contact the World Missions office at (763) 545-5631.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (11 months) - January 1 - November 30, 2004

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN NOVEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$288,771	\$24,069	\$275,252	95
Youth Ministries	φ266,771 54,024	3,516	φ275,252 48,588	90
Parish Education	82,062	9,744	81,637	99
Seminary	154,195	7,177	162,990	106
Bible School	264,089	11,039	276.164	105
Home Missions	287,115	20,670	242,664	85
Church Extension	24,576	751	13,032	53
World Missions	256,326	22,728	193,114	75
Personal Support	328,311	29,501	319,255	97
TOTALS	\$1,739,469	\$129,196	\$1,612,695	93
TOTALS 2003	\$1,740,325	\$118,039	\$1,429,897	82
Goal 92%			•	

The Evangelism Department received \$3,138 in November.

The office of director of Development received \$25 in November.

[Editorial]

Honor others

was watching it live on TV when it happened. During a professional basketball game in Detroit recently, a fan threw a cup of beer at a player. The player, Ron Artest, stormed into the stands. An ugly brawl quickly erupted.

The cameras caught a number of shameful scenes. One in particu-



Craig Johnson

lar grabbed my attention. It wasn't the most dangerous blow thrown and it didn't have the most potential for injuring someone. It demonstrated, however, what can creep into a human heart and what was at the

heart of the problem.

A player and some others were trying to make their way off the court. As they were heading to the locker room a guy standing above them dumped a drink and a box of popcorn on them. As I watched that I wondered: how could somebody do something like that to another human being? The player wasn't a threat to the guy in the stands. It wasn't a case of self-defense. It was a case of one person treating another person as less than human and of little value.

Even if you don't like the team they play for, even if you think they're ridiculously overpaid, even if you think they're liars and cheats, you don't pour a drink and a box of popcorn on another human being. They still remain a creation of God that is to be respected.

I think of another image I saw on TV earlier this year. Homosexual couples were lined up in front of a courthouse waiting for an opportunity to get a marriage license. The Bible clearly teaches that homosexuality is a sin and marriage is between a man and a woman. Seeing all those homosexual couples was certainly not a pleasant sight. I was equally disturbed, however, by the man who was standing there velling at them, spewing such hatred. He wasn't treating those people with any kind of respect. He wasn't treating them as individuals who Jesus loves and longs to see repent and come to Him. He was treating them as objects of scorn with little value.

Human life has become pretty cheap in the eyes of some. I expect that guy in the stands wouldn't throw a drink on his living room floor, but he'll throw it on another human being. He values his rug more than that person. I wouldn't be surprised if the man who yelled and cursed at the homosexuals talks in a much nicer tone to his dogs. Many care more for their pets than for some people's eternal souls.

Those people we disagree with, those people living in sin, those people who upset us are still people. They are still God's special creation. Jesus' blood was still shed for them. They are to be treated as God's workmanship, for that is what they are. Their sin may have marred God's good work, but they are still to be treated with dignity and respect.

We value life because God is the giver of life. We value life like Jesus does. The blind beggars, the tax collector who had cheated people, the woman of the different eth-

They are to be treated as God's workmanship, for that is what they are.

nic group who had had five husbands and was living with another man, the woman caught in adultery — the Lord treated them all as people of value and importance. He was hurt by their actions, but His heart was still full of love and compassion for them. He identifies with the hurting and the helpless and says, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40, NIV).

Jesus sees us, undeserving as we are, as people of value. It is an amazing truth and it is all grace. We respond like the Psalmist: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalm 8:4-5). Because God has treated us this way, we honor others. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" (Romans 12:10). We treat people with honor because we value life. As we value life we bring honor to our gracious God, the Creator of life.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

[ARC]

Live a worthy life

"And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10).

ive a life worthy. This is the ARC's theme for 2005. It's an interesting challenge each year to pick a theme and verse. We always ask ourselves: Will this be an interesting idea? Will the speakers like this topic? The Bible is so full of fantastic verses; the hardest part is choosing just one for the year.

The whole book of Colossians is filled with great word pictures, but that small phrase, "live a life worthy," really jumped out at me. Paul is praying for the believers at Colosse that they may "live a life worthy of the Lord." Wow! What a tall order! Can anyone really do that? I looked up "worthy" in the dictionary. It means valuable or deserving of praise. Well, that's a problem right there. I know what I deserve, and praise is not the first thing that comes to mind. Yet those are Paul's words, not only

to live a life worthy of the Lord, but to please Him in every way. As believers, how do we do this?

It's an intriguing challenge. The answer lies in our relying on the finished work of Jesus. Paul also reminds the believers in this chapter that they have been rescued, that they are: holy, reconciled, without blemish, and perfect in Christ. Perhaps the words, "Christ in you, the hope of glory," in verse 27 are key.

I don't claim to fully understand this verse. That's one of the reasons I suggested it. I guess you could say that's one of the benefits of being the director's wife. Last year I understood our theme verse far better in December than in January. So I look forward to hearing the messages of each speaker in 2005, and hope that perhaps your appetite is whet also. Thank you to each one who has agreed to share. We pray for each one of you as you prepare to bring God's Word to us here at the ARC this coming year.

- Wendy Westlake

2005	SidebySide (grades 7-12) January 28-30	Couples Retreat February 11-12	Men's Retreat April 22-23	Kids Camp June 24-26	Classics Retreat Sept. 30 – Oct. 2
schedu	Jr. Sno Daze (grades 4-7) January 28-30	Women's Retreat Apr 1-3	Jr. Camp June 19-24	Family Camp July 24-30	Family Retreat Sept. 30 – Oct. 2