

THE LUTHERAN



JANUARY 2007

AMBASSADOR

God's artistry

Some days you come in music

some days in silence

some days in movement

a dance of body and soul

but always you come

like a new day arising

alive, complete, whole

— J. Hillstrom

sibling



love

BY PASTOR TIM HINRICHS

I'll never forget the way my Dad characterized how my sisters and I were getting along one summer as children: "We're just a family of brutes!" At one point, my parents decided that on vacation they would give a kindness award every day to whomever would be the most kind and generous.

No, it's not easy for brothers and sisters to get along. Why? One simple reason — we're self-centered.

Consider I Peter 3:8: "To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit." Peter gives us in this short verse an incredible challenge. In the context, he is writing to fellow Christians and encouraging them to live the life with Christ which will bring a great blessing. Why is this especially challenging? He's basically telling us to live as a loving and harmonious family of God. Get along with everyone in your congregation — your brothers and sisters. Easier said than done!

Yes, it's easy to bless and get along with my friends. I chose them because I like their character and personality. But I didn't choose the people in my congregation as brothers and sisters — they were born. And it's not always easy to get along. Often the worst fights are between siblings. It's the same in the church. It demands a lot of energy to serve the Lord together in peace.

What can we do to make it work? Offer a kindness award? English preacher T. Austin-Sparks wrote these words: "There is nothing that demands crucifixion more than to live with other Christians all your days. ... you have to defer, refer, submit, let go. In a thousand and

one ways you have to put your own likes and dislikes aside." It seems that this is what Peter is telling us — that in order to serve God together we have to submit to one another and humble ourselves. That's a very difficult step to take, but the blessings that result are incredible.

Often our problem is that we think only about ourselves — about "my needs." The key to the blessed life in the body of Christ is when I forget about myself and think about my brother and my sister. "What does he need?" "What does she need?" "How can I bless him?"

What is the first step to a blessed life in the congregation? It isn't waiting until someone comes to me to offer help or ask for forgiveness. It's realizing that not only do I need those people whom God placed around me in my church, but *they need me as well*. We need each other's fellowship, help, prayers, encouragement. God put every single brother or sister in your congregation for a purpose — to be a blessing and to bless. Nobody is an island in the sea; we are all connected and need each other.

As Peter reminds us, these relationships come with humility. We all need to see how much we need the words, the gifts, the talents, the provision of those in the congregation. They are God's hands to us, and we are God's hands to them. What an amazing blessing it is to be in among the fellowship of brothers and sisters. As the Psalmist writes: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

Hinrichs, a missionary in Poland, is an AFLC pastor on loan to the East European Missions Network.

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The men who have been the really bold artists,
the realistic artists, the uncompromising artists,
are the men who have turned out, after all, to be
writing with a purpose.

— G.K. Chesterton

[An author should never conceive of himself as bringing
into existence beauty or wisdom which did not exist
before, but simply and solely as trying to embody in
terms of his own art some reflection of that eternal
Beauty and Wisdom.]

— C.S. Lewis

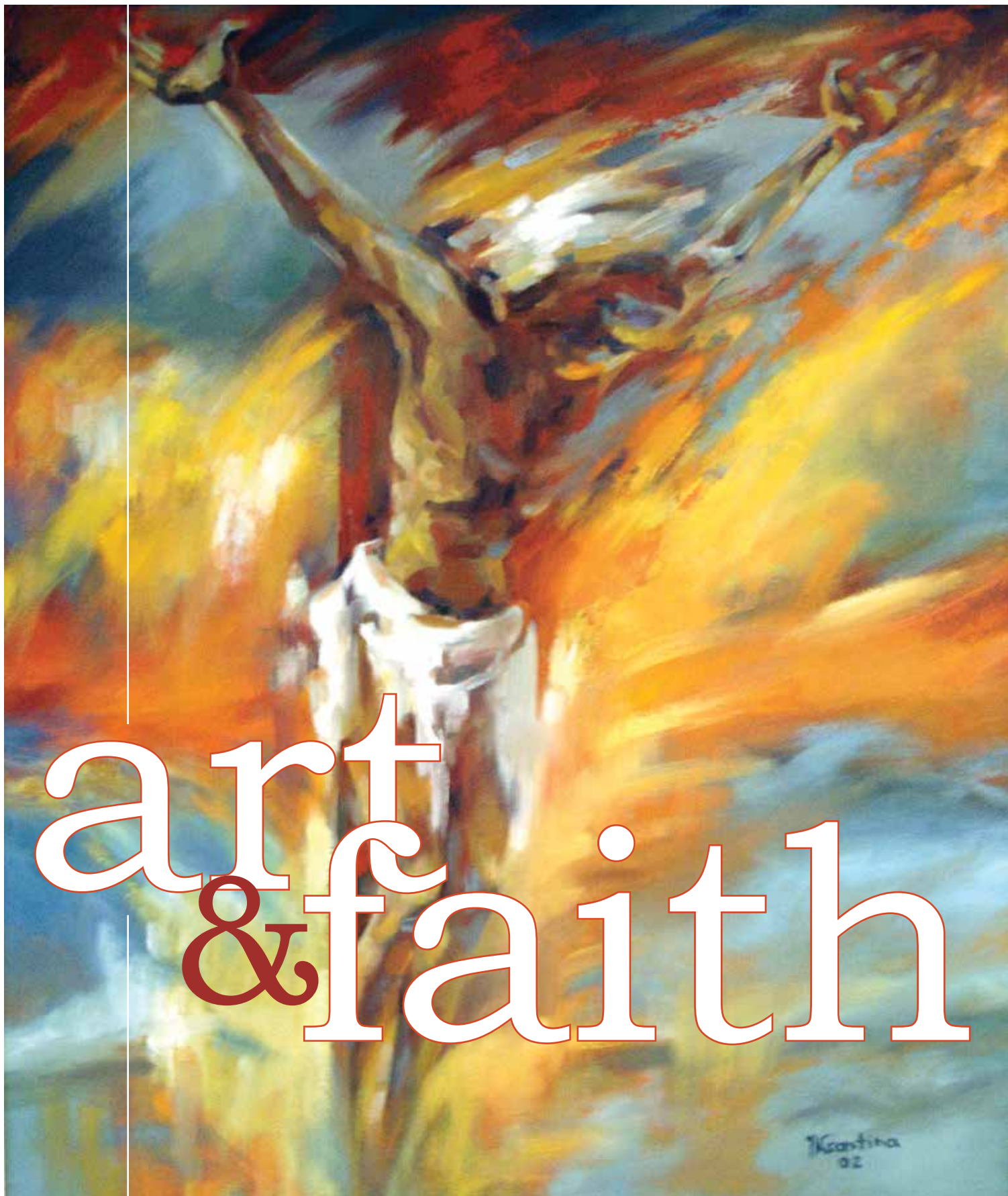
The music we listen to, the images we plant in our
minds, the stories we tell — all have enormous
power over the kind of people we are. They both
express and shape our beliefs and values.

— Charles Colson

“The Christian in Today’s Culture”

The gift of language combined with the gift of
song was given to man that he should proclaim
the Word of God through music.

— Martin Luther



art & faith

BY LOIELL DYRUD

God calls, gifts and instructs artists to convey His message

According to Philip Graham Ryken, “At its best, art is able to ... satisfy our deep longing for beauty and communicate profound spiritual, intellectual, and emotional truth about the world that God has made for his glory.” In *Art for God’s Sake*, Ryken discusses the arduous task of the artist. Great art requires great skill. Yet few appreciate the complexity of the artist’s work. The situation is even more difficult for the Christian artist as many churches today do not consider art a serious way to serve God. In some cases, both art and the artist are viewed with suspicion.

Throughout history, the Christian church has had differing views about art. Some of the greatest art the world has known was created with Christian subjects and displayed in Christian churches and cathedrals. At other times, the Christian church eliminated all forms of church art as idolatrous. Witness the various Puritan movements as example.

Even today many Christians view the arts — visual, theatrical, literary — with no small degree of skepticism. Nevertheless, Ryken points to Exodus 31 as a “good place to begin constructing a biblical view of art where God calls two men (Bezalel and Oholiab) to be artists.” God not only calls them, He also gifts and instructs them as master craftsmen to build His temple.

From this biblical account, Ryken deduces that “artists are called and gifted personally, by name — to write, paint, sing, play, and dance to the glory of God.” Martin Luther, too, says, “... I would gladly see all the arts, especially music, in the service of Him who has given and created them” (*What Luther Says*, by Ewald M. Plass). But today, except for music, Christians seem less inclined to embrace the arts. Fewer contemporary sanctuaries make use of stained-glass windows, altar paintings, or ornately-carved altars, opting instead for a more sparse, almost warehouse-looking sanctuary. But it was not always thus.

Visual arts were an important part of the church setting as an expression of faith. Lutheran churches built before the first half of the 20th century were likely to have employed craftsmen who built meticulous pulpits, altars, and railings; stained-glass artisans who created windows of intricate beauty; and artists who painted striking altar art. More specifically in the Midwest, if one looked in the lower right hand corner of an altar painting, one often saw the name “Klagstad.”

As one of the most prolific altar painters in the first half of the twentieth century, August Klagstad emigrated from Norway at the age of 5. After training at the Art Institute of Chicago, he set up his studio in Minneapolis in 1900,

where he continued selling altar paintings, statuary, and church furnishings throughout North America until his death in 1949.

In one of his catalogs, Klagstad features 43 different paintings from which a church could choose. Most notable are “Christ in Gethsemane,” depicting Christ gazing upward, kneeling beside a boulder with hands folded in prayer; five different versions of “The Good Shepherd,” each showing Christ carrying a lamb; and three different versions of the famous “Christ Knocking at the Door.”

Klagstad adds a word of advice in his catalog: “No church should put in crude, amateurish efforts merely because they are cheap. The church of God is worthy of the painstaking effort of experienced and capable artists.” This advice still rings true.

Ryken, too, indicates Christian art should be of “artistic excellence” if it is to honor God: “All too often we settle for something that is functional, but not beautiful. We gravitate toward what is familiar, popular, or commercial, with little regard for the enduring values of artistic excellence. Sometimes what we produce can be described only as *kitsch* — tacky artwork of poor quality that appeals to low tastes.”

One of the most arresting Klagstads can be found in the altar of Bethany Lutheran Church in Astoria, Ore., “Christ on the Sea of Galilee.” In this picture, we see Christ walking on the water, reaching down for the hand of the terrified Peter, who is sinking to his waist in the green-tinted swells. The waves are breaking in the background while Jesus calmly raises his other hand to still the storm. Sitting in that church looking out over the four-mile-wide Columbia River as it approaches the Pacific Ocean, one can understand the comfort this painting has offered parishioners over the past 100 years in a city where so many are involved in seagoing occupations.

And that is one of the benefits of altar art. One is drawn to the altar Sunday after Sunday. Without being aware of it, the image leaves an unforgettable impression on both young and old. Altar paintings, according to

(Continued on page 16)

BY JEREMY ERICKSON

1 know deeply

Kingdom art
can invite us
to discover
truth again

I was behind the wheel of a 1996 Chevy Beretta, driving north out of Bismarck toward Minot, N.D. Call me silly, but this is still one of my favorite places to be. Certainly the people are great, but I really like the scenery. At least for five or six months a year, the Dakota prairies sit side-by-side in my mind with great ocean views and expansive mountain vistas. And I think it all began, or culminated, perhaps, with this late summer drive on Highway 83 at sundown.

A Rich Mullins CD was playing in my car stereo. My windows were down, and the sun was setting over sprawling fields of harvest-ready wheat. Rich was singing something about the prairies calling out the name of their Maker. In poetic imagery and artistic detail, Rich's song put to words what I was feeling in my heart that moment. And as the words and the music, the drive and the scenery blurred into one stunning experience of awe and wonder, I worshipped my Maker, joining with the gold and the green, the grasses and the flowers, in one profound song of praise.

I had driven this stretch of road many times before. I'd seen countless Dakota sunsets. But seeing it that evening through the song of this Kingdom artist caused me to "see

it again" in a way I had not before. I noticed — as though for the first time — that the heavens were indeed "declaring the glory of God."

Art does this in ways that straightforward explanation most often does not. We are taught, and we come to know what is true. For many of us, we have known what we know for a long time. Learning it again the same way we learned it before may be a necessary reminder, but it doesn't often bring life to our pages (as it may have the first time) as much as it dusts off the cover of what we already know to be true.

Art, however, in its better moments, can make truth new. It does not, and cannot, *create new truth*, but art can invite us to rediscover what we have often already known, in modes and ways that cause us to feel as though we hardly knew it before. In this sense, art is able (and used by God) to make truth new.

Christ spoke frequently in parables — a mode of teaching and an art form common in His day. He spoke this way most often to religious Jews, who likely knew a great deal of the Law and the Prophets, which Christ said He came not to abolish, but to fulfill. When He told stories about



seeds and sheep, He was not talking about farming, but about spiritual realities that had been previously detailed in the Law and the Prophets, yet had somehow become old hat to those who knew them.

He spoke this way to those who had had very little exposure to those truths, as they had been set forth in the Torah — to the “tax-collectors and sinners,” as it were. Telling them stories that communicated these realities in ways that might be remembered and absorbed (though not always immediately explained), Jesus invited those with whom He spoke into this bigger world — this Kingdom — from which He came.

In Exodus 31, we learn the name of the first man in the Scriptures said to be filled with the Spirit of God. He is Bezalel, a man given “skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts — to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver, bronze, wood ...” all for the purpose of decorating the Tent of Meeting — the place of worship where men met God.

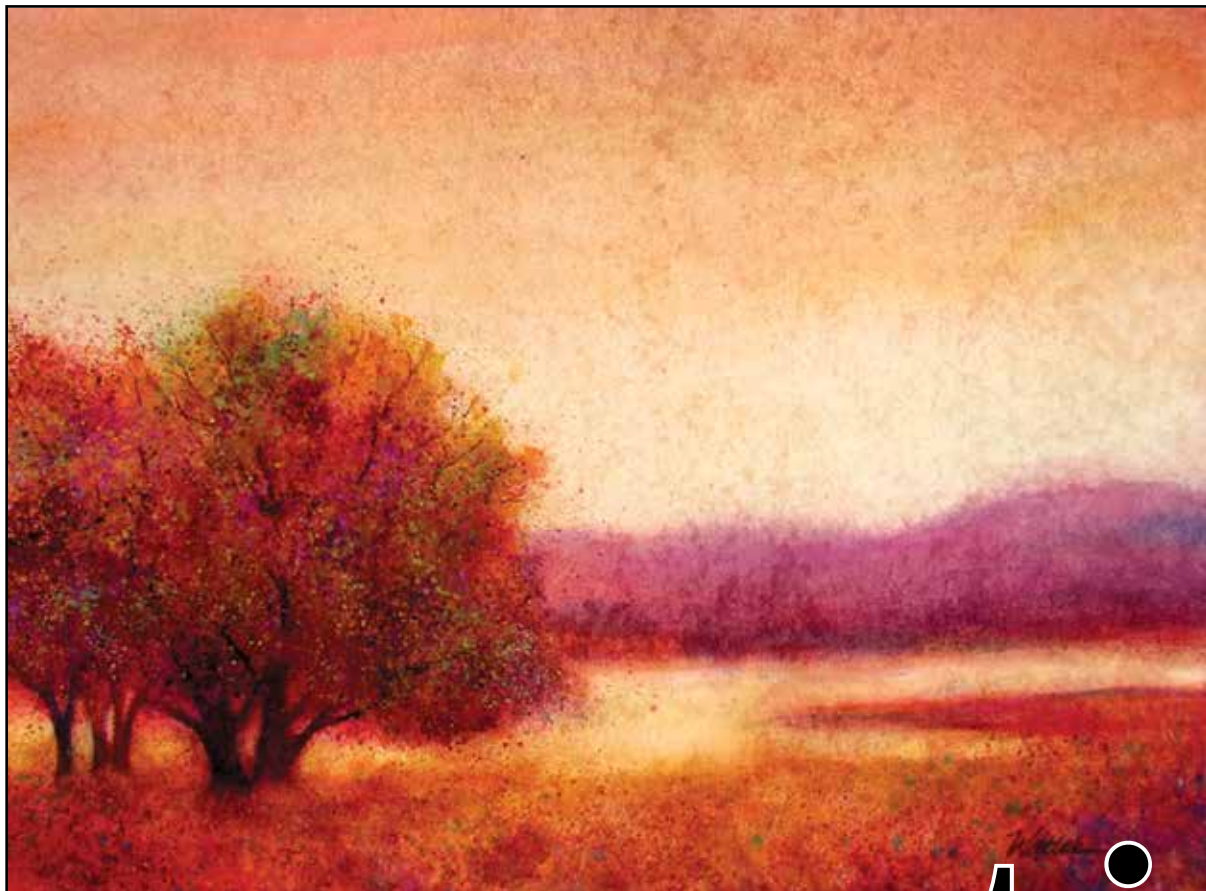
In a New Testament context, this world is our place of worship (in vocation, play, service, and relationship), and Kingdom artists are charged still with the task of decorat-

ing this world to be, even more than it is, an environment that invites men to know something of themselves and their Maker.

Using the raw materials of matter and music, muse and memory — for no one but God creates something out of nothing — the artist crafts an experience of the senses that speaks of a reality that is more than the sum of its parts.

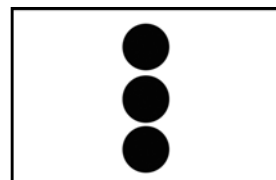
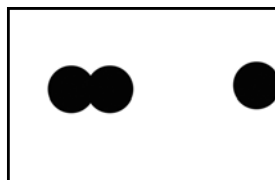
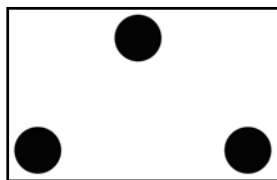
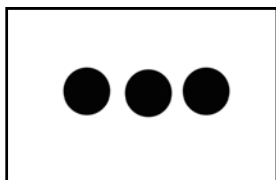
Whether bringing our attention to the grandness of the created cosmos, the depravity of man, the beauty of romantic or maternal love, the playful curiosity of a child, the glory of the Cross, the attributes of God, or any other of a nearly infinite spread of raw materials, the artist invites us to know something more deeply than we’ve known it before. And in this way, especially in the Kingdom, the artist glorifies his Maker by doing what artists are made to do.

Erickson recently resigned from serving as youth director at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minn., and is undergoing continuing treatment for cancer. He is a musician and writer, and has posted writings regarding his battle with cancer online at www.jeremyerickson.com.



The creative gift

BY WENDY WESTLAKE



“Artists are weird.”

I hear that comment a lot. Mostly from my family. I don’t even protest anymore, and sometimes I have to agree. But why the perception? What goes on in the minds of artists to make them different from anybody else?

I can’t speak for all artists, but I can try to describe what goes on in my mind and what motivates me.

If you look at the rectangles on these two pages, you see in each three black circles of equal size. Each rectangle contains a different arrangement of the circles. Each one is different and unique. I’ve shown you 12 but I could make many more. Now imagine I changed the size or shape of those circles. Or I could add another element like line, texture or color. You can see that the possibilities are endless. That’s what I love about art: the endless possibilities for visual creativity.

Creativity is a gift from our Creator. When He made man in His image I believe He also gave us the ability to be creative. It’s a reflection of our heavenly Father’s nature and a quality unique to humans. (O.K., there’s that elephant in the zoo with the paint brush, but I really don’t want to go there.) *People* show creativity in many ways. I’m writing about artists so I’ll stick to the topic of visual creativity.

Creativity. As an artist I really appreciate this aspect of God’s nature. He shows us His creativity every day in many ways. I see it in the morning sunrise when the horizon glows dusty rose rising and melting into soft peaches and yellows fading to warm muted grays. That lovely sky is a gorgeous backdrop for the fields, trees, lakes and streams that fill our Midwestern landscape. I’m amazed every day at the beauty God created, and I understand more about Him by what I see in His creation.

Romans 1:20 says, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

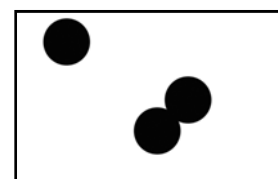
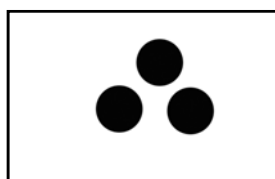
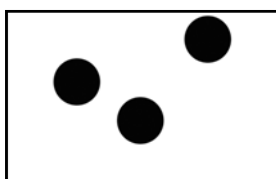
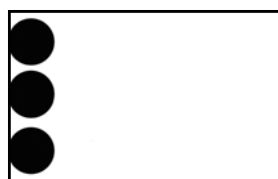
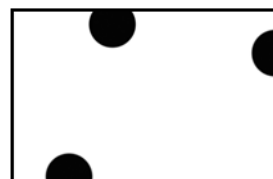
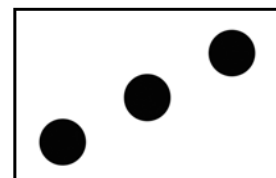
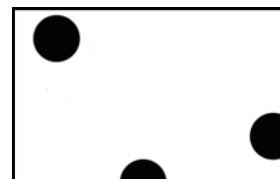
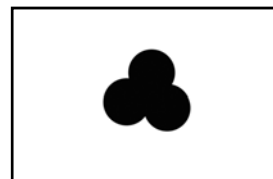
He is a God of strength. Picture the rugged beauty of the Rocky Mountains, the Grand Canyon or the wild Sahara Desert.

He is a God of detail. Imagine an oak tree in the late fall, from its sturdy trunk the thickest gnarled limbs grow twisting and turning, gradually becoming smaller and smaller limbs, which, in turn, form smaller branches forming a delicate, lace-like frame for this magnificent tree. Or consider snowflakes, each one a tiny work of art.

He is a God who absolutely loves variety. Think of all the varieties of dogs He made or butterflies or fish. Think of the billions of people He’s made, and not two the same. Now that’s amazing creativity!

I could go on and on describing the beauty and variety of God’s creation, but as they say, “A picture is worth a thousand words.” It’s true. I struggle to put into words how I feel about what I see. It’s much easier for me to express those feelings visually. So when I paint I try to convey some of what I appreciate about my God in the work I do. I thank Him for His amazing creativity and the beauty I see all around me.

Westlake, whose art is featured at left, lives in Zumbrota, Minn.



embracing artists

BY JOSHUA SKOGERBOE

Hello. My name is Joshua, I was born in 1972, and I've been an artist for 34 years.

I like movies that contain broad themes, layers of metaphor, rich cinematography, nuanced acting and an orchestral score to match. I have an emotional connection to just the right level of chewy-to-crispy in my pizza crust. While my accounting-major pastor thinks linearly, speaks clearly, and can effectively plan long-range for a whole series of messages, I think in colors, answer simple questions

with a range of possible options, and regularly harness the adrenaline rush of a fast approaching deadline to generate results.

I wear my heart on my sleeve — is there another place for it? Some see this and call it “emotional.” I prefer “passionate.” Some say “stubborn.” I think I have conviction. I want to feel deeply, experience fully and create! I belong to a band of brothers — fellow creators — artists. And I think we scare church people.

There is a notion adrift everywhere that imagination, especially mystical imagination, is dangerous to man’s mental balance. Poets are commonly spoken of as psychologically unreliable ... Facts and history utterly contradict this view ... The poet desires exaltation and expansion, a world to stretch himself in. The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits (*Orthodoxy*, by G.K. Chesterton).

Church, don’t be afraid! You may actually learn to love your artists because of their *arti-ness*. Embracing artists does not equate to selling out doctrinal purity for wishy-washy emotionalism and sentimentality. We can fight our culture’s steady mantra of relativity while redeeming art for God’s glory. God’s message of justice and mercy will not change if we embrace Jesus’ model of storytelling and metaphor to bring His truth to our communities in ways they can understand.

Art can do that. Good art surprises us — great art changes us. God made artists to be His tool to reach people who need a brand new look at unchanging truth. Artists in the church have a calling, and God has created them and used them for His purpose and His pleasure from Old Testament times until today.

God’s genius as a Creator is highlighted most of all when we look around us at the brilliant kaleidoscope of personalities, gifts, and passions in the people of His Church: statisticians and painters, administrators and poets all designed to honor Him with their gifts. If local congregations long to become all God has called them to be, they must embrace the gifts and unique God-inspired wiring of everyone in their church. Celebrate your accountants! Encourage the teachers in your midst! Let those with leadership skills lead with all diligence. Pastors, shepherds, healers, givers, prophets, singers, painters, dancers, actors ... eyeballs, ears, hands, feet ... all parts of the Body. For every moment in history — His story — God has crafted each part with intention and perfect wisdom. Incorporating the gifts of creative people into our church experience today, as always, takes time, intentional planning and room for risk taking. But the payoff is awesome.

Consider Eric Liddell, the “Flying Scotsman,” a missionary kid who would become the fastest runner in Scotland, winning the 400 meters at the 1924 Olympics. He had a passion for God’s work, and would himself become a missionary to China. When asked about how his running fit in with his ministry, he said, “I believe God

made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.”

When Spirit-led artists are given freedom to create and encouraged to share their honest offerings with the church family, God moves. I have served two church families that have truly loved the artists among them with a love that bore Kingdom fruit. New songs of faith are written and sung. Dances are loosed. Artists are given permission to express deeply and the congregation is given permission to feel deeply. Christ’s followers experience their long-held beliefs in surprising new ways. Sometimes, we get to see the spiritually curious begin a new faith journey as the Holy Spirit works through the creative endeavors of His children. And through it all, artists thrive.

So, how can the local church care for and empower the artists among us in a way that best honors our Father?

Accept and embrace the quirks, eccentricities, passions and gifts of your artists. Their colorful personalities reflect part of God’s character. Encourage them to serve with joy and freedom. Encourage them to create beautiful art that imitates and reflects the beauty of the Master Creator. Let artists be artists in the church, so they can feel God’s pleasure and so the Kingdom can expand on earth.

Then, understand the need for (and so encourage) artists to live and serve in deep community with one another.

In *An Hour On Sunday*, teacher and artist Nancy Beach wrote, “When it’s all said and done, I want to cross the finish line knowing that I was a part of a team who loved each other outrageously and did ministry side by side until the end.”

God set apart the Levites to live and serve together as singers, instrumentalists, and prophets in the tabernacle. Solos are great, but choirs were God’s idea! In fact, the Bible is full from cover to cover with clear instruction to His people to do life together. Be in each other’s homes. Break bread. Pray. Serve together. For artists, who are prone to introspection and who bump heads with our production-driven, post-modern, industrial culture, the need for community with like-minded believers is especially poignant. Artists understand artists. Creative thinkers fuel each other.

Church, we artists love being artists. We know we can drive you a little crazy. We wish we were good at math. We ask for your grace and for a place to use our gifts to exalt our King. If you encourage us to be us — to join together and serve as a community of humble, Spirit-fueled Kingdom artists, the Church, God’s Body, will grow, and He will be honored.

When I play drums with my closest friends — my family of Levites — I feel God’s pleasure.

Skogerboe served as Minister of Celebration at Emmaus Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Minn., for several years before helping to plant Living Hope Church in St. Michael, Minn., where he now serves as worship and executive pastor.



be praised

BY JESSICA HILLSTROM

You spoke
and we were
something from nothing
except you are
everything

You sang
and we danced
moved by love
captured by grace
beauty so bright

{ be praised }

Creator
uncreated
the world in your hand
you ask us
the created
to sing
like you sang

for the honor, your glory

{ be praised }

We are nothing
without you
the love that makes life
our art has no meaning
without you
the beat of our song

Whatever our offering
be it noble, lovely
be it faithful or true

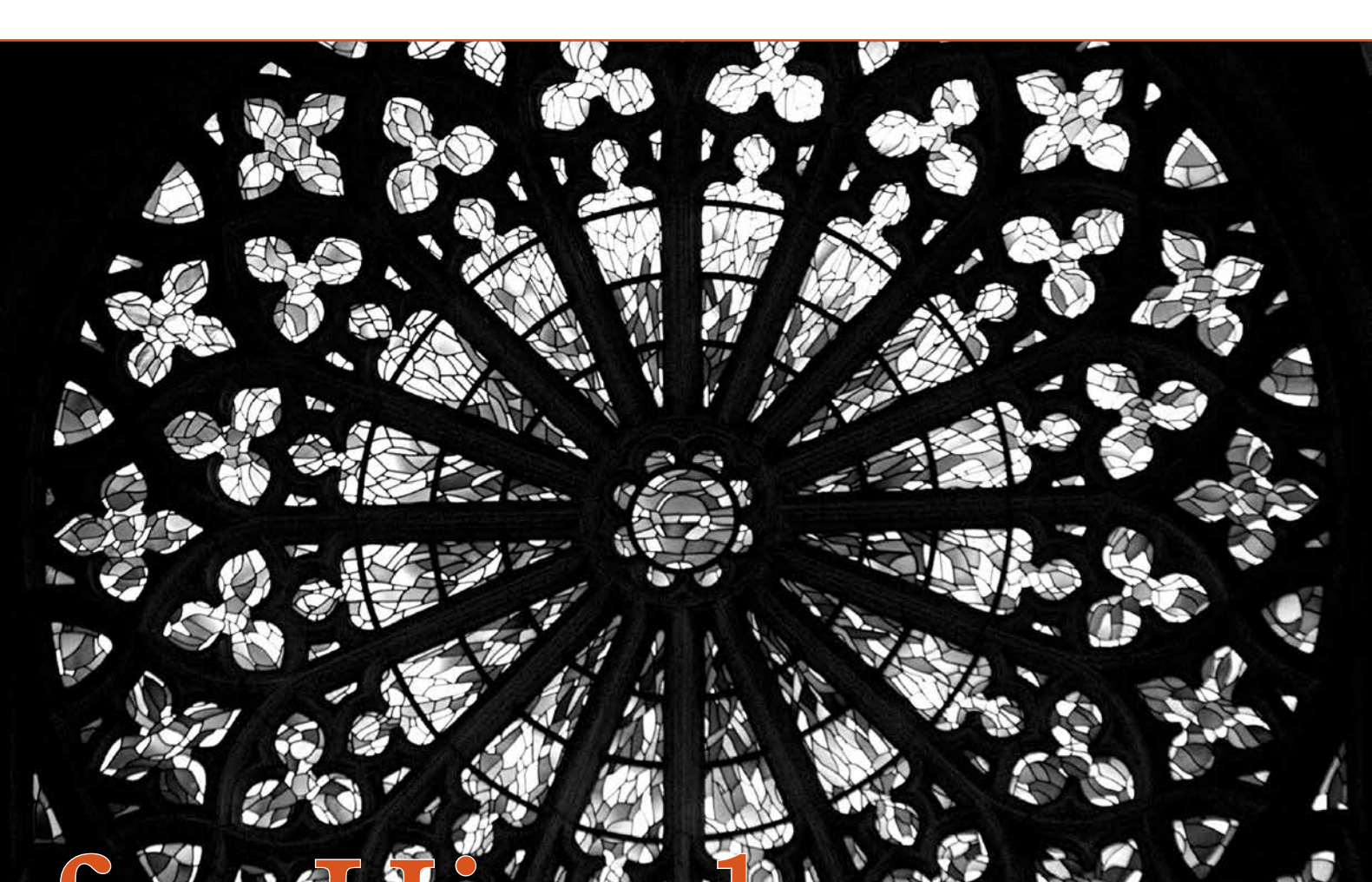
may you
the Creator
declare
it is good

And above all
may you

{ be praised }

*Hillstrom is a member of Vision of
Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn.*





for His glory

BY PASTOR TOM BROCK

One of the best reasons to visit Europe is to see its 800-year-old cathedrals. They are filled with Christian art, partly because most people in the Middle Ages could not read.

Huge stained glass windows tell stories from the Old and New Testaments for their sake. Here at Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, we have continued this practice.

If you walk into our sanctuary you will see the wall on the right filled with pictures of Old Testament stories. On the wall to the left you will see stories from the life of Jesus — from the annunciation to the second coming and all the stories in-between. Though they are not stained glass, the printed pictures still carry the same message. I am encouraged when I see new visitors walking from picture to picture in our sanctuary. It is especially inspiring to see a parent walk his child down the aisle explaining the pictures.

Some people believe we should have no paintings or sculpture in our churches because this violates the commandment of making no graven images. But that commandment is aimed at not worshipping golden calves. Pictures of Christ and of Bible stories are fine. Of course, no one really knows how Jesus looked. But that is not the point. Most of our churches have a cross on the wall.

We must admit Christ's cross was ugly and blood-stained while our crosses are rather attractive. The point is that symbols are good reminders of our faith, even if the symbol is guesswork.

One area where I believe the Catholics have it right is in using the arts for the glory of God. Yes, there have been excesses in the history of the Church, and certainly we stand against selling indulgences to fund Christian art. But let's keep the baby while we throw out the bath water. I believe God is pleased when people use the arts to glorify Him, whether that be music, painting, sculpture, whatever. The Apostle Paul said, "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (I Timothy 4:4). I think we enhance our homes and worship spaces with Christian art because art is a powerful way of keeping the truths of the Bible before our eyes and in our ears.

Brock is pastor of Hope Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

get in

BY ANALAYA UNVERZAGT



the

act

Backstage, nervously waiting for the play to start, I thought I was going to throw up. As a last-minute fill-in, I had just memorized all my lines. Five days earlier, when a cast member realized she had to miss the performance because of work, my dad, Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, asked me, “Honey, I need to know if you’d be willing to learn this part for me?” As one of the directors, Dad told me that if I did, he would buy me something for \$20. So I willingly took the part.

Faith on Fire (FOF), a drama team, has been a part of the ministry at Christ is Lord Free Lutheran Church, Onalaska, Wis., for many years. More than 40 percent of our active youth group roster is part of FOF. Last year our group performed at 12 different churches in three different states.

The drama ministry is not only incredibly fun, but it has been a great way for most (if not all) of the students involved in it to become more outgoing, much better at public speaking, and grow spiritually. They have also become more comfortable with sharing their testimonies publicly. Each practice and performance begins and ends with prayer. At first, not many people wanted to pray out loud. Now many people are willing.

Last year a young man from our youth group approached our director and asked him — very quietly — if he could join FOF. The director had to ask him to repeat himself because he couldn’t hear the question. But by the end of the following year of performances, audience members commented on how loud and clear he was!

Even though I wasn’t a member of FOF for that first performance five years ago, I ended up keeping the part for the rest of the year and officially joined the ministry. I have grown to love acting, even though I get a little nervous before going onstage. I often sit backstage, not wanting to be animated, loud or pretend to be someone else, and on top of it having to remember all my lines in front of more than 100 people.

Years ago, some Christians had a hard time with drama in the church because people were pretending to be someone they were not. But acting is not much different from the parables recorded in the Bible. Parables are stories Jesus told to teach a spiritual lesson; that is exactly

what our plays do. They are an interesting and creative way to witness and a great way to get unchurched friends and family into the church. Who doesn’t like an evening of entertainment?

At a show a couple of years ago, a young girl came who hadn’t been to church in a long time. After our performance she told us she realized she needed to come back to church. That’s what it’s all about. We have fun and want our audience to have fun and laugh until it hurts. But our ultimate goal is to bring glory and honor to God.

Satan often tries to get in the way of us glorifying God; he doesn’t want God’s Word to go forward. A performance last summer — one of the hardest we’ve ever done — is a good example. First, a team member with three parts was not able to come on the trip. We had last minute fill-ins who quickly tried to memorize pages of lines. On top of this, two cast members had fevers and two others had the stomach flu. Then, one girl who had knee surgery a year earlier ran off stage and twisted her knee. She did her best to act and not look like she was in pain. We were also doing our play at the end of a retreat, so we’d been playing hard all weekend and getting much less sleep than usual.

Prayer was the only way we got through it!

Despite all the distractions, we didn’t call the play off or give up. We persevered with God’s help. God’s Word went forward even though Satan didn’t want it to. God was there with us the whole time, and amazing things happened that day. He showed us that no matter how bad Satan wants us to give up, we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). That was a very big bonding moment for our group. We realized the power of prayer and God’s amazing care for us.

In a week I will once again be behind the curtain waiting to go on stage to perform our new play, “The New Life Zone” (a spoof of “The Twilight Zone”). I no longer feel scared or sick about performing. Instead, I’ll be excited and ready to go — to step out in front of the lights and the people, take a step of faith, and go for it. God will take care of the rest.

Unverzagt, 17, is a member of Christ is Lord Church, Onalaska, Wis.

Klagstad, leave “particularly impressive and lasting effects on the mind of youth. Pictures are loop-holes of escape to the soul, leading to other scenes and other spheres. Pictures are consolers of loneliness; they are books; and they are histories and sermons which we can read without the trouble of turning over the leaves.”

The country church where I attended as a youth had an altar painting of the crucifixion, a startlingly realistic painting by Wilhelm Windahl, a local artist. I will never forget the impact this painting had on me as a teenager partaking of communion. There, a mere 15 feet away was the image of Christ bearing my sins on the cross while I, kneeling at the altar railing, was offered full satisfaction for my sins through the Lord’s Supper. One never forgets the impact of a work of art like that.

One of the more famous contemporary church artists is David Hetland, renowned for his stained-glass creations as well as his murals. For the past 30 years, he created the huge back-drop murals for the Concordia College (Moorhead, Minn.) Christmas concerts. Hetland, who passed away last April and whose stained-glass art and murals have added beauty to countless churches across America, claimed his “artistic talent was a gift from God he was compelled to share with others.”

Though modern or abstract art is often dismissed by Christians as being too negative, too morbid, or too incomprehensible, Ryken has a different view. “What Christians tend to dismiss is abstract art, especially as it has come to expression in modern art. Yet abstraction has God’s blessing as much as any other art form. The example of the tabernacle proves that God loves all kinds of art, in all kinds of media and all kinds of styles — provided, that is, that they are in keeping with the perfections of His character. As John Calvin said, ‘All the arts come from God and are to be respected as divine inventions.’”

My wife and I have found this to be true. A few years ago, a Fullbright exchange artist from Latvia spent a year at the college where my wife teaches. We liked her work and commissioned her to paint a crucifixion scene in the abstract mode. We were pleasantly surprised by the finished product. Because it was abstract art, the artist merely suggests the horizontal bar of the cross. As a result, Christ’s arms seem to rise up in triumph, suggesting victory over sin and death. This could never have been achieved in a realistic venue, where the artist would have shown His hands nailed to the cross. Through the use of an abstraction, a completely new dimension was achieved.

Perhaps by taking a limited view of Christian art, we may be diminishing a potentially powerful spiritual influence on our lives. Why not place more emphasis on the visual arts in our sanctuaries? Would it not be in keeping with Exodus 31 to employ the best in artistic expression in our churches today as a way of communicating our faith and bringing glory to God?

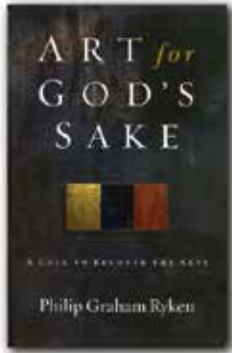
Dyrud, a member of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, Minn., is on the Board of Publications and Parish Education.

art
& faith

resources

763-545-5631 or email parished@aflc.org

Art and Creativity



Art for God's Sake

A CALL TO RECOVER THE ARTS

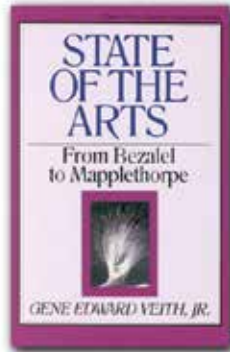
What does God say about the arts? Can a Christian be an artist? How do the arts impact your church? Theologically rich and remarkably readable, this book offers sound biblical reasons to cultivate a sense of beauty and use our creative gifts to the glory of God. \$5.95



Walking on Water

REFLECTIONS ON FAITH AND ART

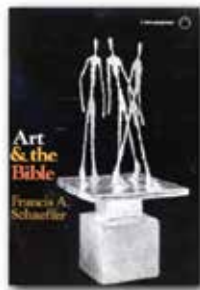
These meditations on the nature of art and its relation to faith take a fresh look at what it means to be a Christian artist and what separates Christian art from that which is supposedly secular. \$12.50



State of the Arts

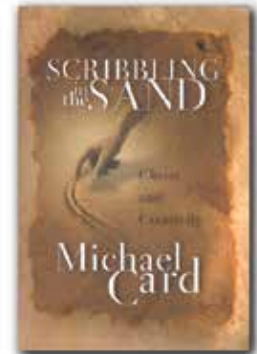
FROM BEZALEL TO MAPPLETHORPE

This book establishes a strong biblical context for understanding expressions of human creativity, powerfully defends art as a gift from God, and suggests ways to counter the decadence and corruption that plagues the contemporary art world. \$14



Art & the Bible

In this little booklet, Dr. Francis Schaeffer shows how the Bible records the use of various art forms in the Old Testament and suggests eleven perspectives within which a Christian view of art can take shape. \$7



Scribbling in the Sand

CHRIST AND CREATIVITY

Whether we think of ourselves as creative or not, all of us are created in the image of our Creator God, and thus creativity is a vital expression of our discipleship. This book explores the biblical foundations of true Christian creativity. With Jesus as his model, the author shows how understanding God's creative imagination leads to a lifestyle of humility, obedience, and servanthood and invites us to follow God's creative call through worship and community. \$11.75 (study guide & audio book available)

Addicted to Mediocrity

Why have Christians today sacrificed the artistic prominence they enjoyed for centuries and settled instead for mediocrity? Author Franky Schaeffer shows how Christians can begin to reverse the slide toward mediocrity by demanding excellence in the arts and media, and in all areas of life; by giving our time, talents and money to those things which are worthy of our support and are truly honoring to God; and by staying away from the cheap, the shoddy, and the make-a-fast-buck mentality. \$13.50

Campus hosts Christmas



TOP: Members of the Proclaim Choir perform Dec. 10 in the campus chapel. Campus staff are currently remodeling the front of the chapel to provide room for a new pipe organ. LEFT & RIGHT: Members of the AFLBS Choir and Seminary Chorus perform during the Christmas concerts.

concerts

Chapel remodeling project continues



AFLC Schools maintenance staff worked feverishly in the weeks before the Christmas concerts to remove the mail room from the front of the chapel area.

The AFLC Schools campus hosted parents, friends and guests during a weekend of Christmas choir concerts, gospel team performances, basketball games and a Scandinavian food festival Dec. 8-10. The annual event was also the scene of AFLBS Parent's Weekend.

While choirs from the seminary and Bible school prepared for the concerts during fall semester, maintenance staff worked tirelessly in the weeks prior to the concerts to prepare the chapel. Remodeling work will allow space for a new pipe organ yet to be installed. The projects included removing the mail room from the front of the chapel, building a stage area, refinishing the pews and opening up the former seminary classroom area.

For more information on how you can help with the projects, contact the schools at (763) 544-9501.

Jacksons work in discipleship training

We have just ended our summer tour of our three fields here in Mexico (the states of Puebla, Sonora and Sinaloa) and are now working in the migrant agricultural camps evangelizing and discipling new converts so that they will be able to go back to their towns and villages in the more remote southern states and continue the work of making disciples. It is a glorious thing seeing how God creates in men, women and children new hearts to love and obey Him with joy.



We shared the gospel with Asuncion, a woman in Puebla, but we can't take credit for her re-creation. One day she came home to find her chickens had gotten up onto her home altar, and had made a mess all over her statues of the saints and the Virgin of Guadalupe. She said it was when she stepped in the door and saw the mess that she realized God was not made with the hands of man.

No, we don't make Him; He makes us. Please continue to pray for God's work here in Mexico.

Darwin, Mary Ann and Gracie Jackson are AFLC missionaries on loan to World Mission Prayer League.

WORLD MISSIONS NEWS

Pastoral training continues in India

The majority of pastors in the AFLC of India are lay pastors in need of theological training. With the input of Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLTS dean, AFLC World Missions developed a six-year pastoral training program. Each year four courses are taught by pastors and teachers from the United States and Canada. This year Pastor Jim and Linda Fugleberg, Fargo, N.D.; Pastor Del and Karen Palmer, Shakopee, Minn.; Pastor David W. Johnson, Silverhill, Ala.; and Pastor Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City, Okla., will travel to India to continue the training program. The trip is planned for Jan. 26-Feb. 11.

Schierkolks on Furlough in 2007

Todd and Barb Schierkolk and their family will be on furlough from their post in Jerez, Mexico this year. They plan to come to the United States in time for the Free Lutheran Youth Convention the first of July and return to Mexico Sept. 30. Their furlough calendar is filled with Bible camps and visits to congregations.

Already there

BY PASTOR STEPHEN MUNDFROM

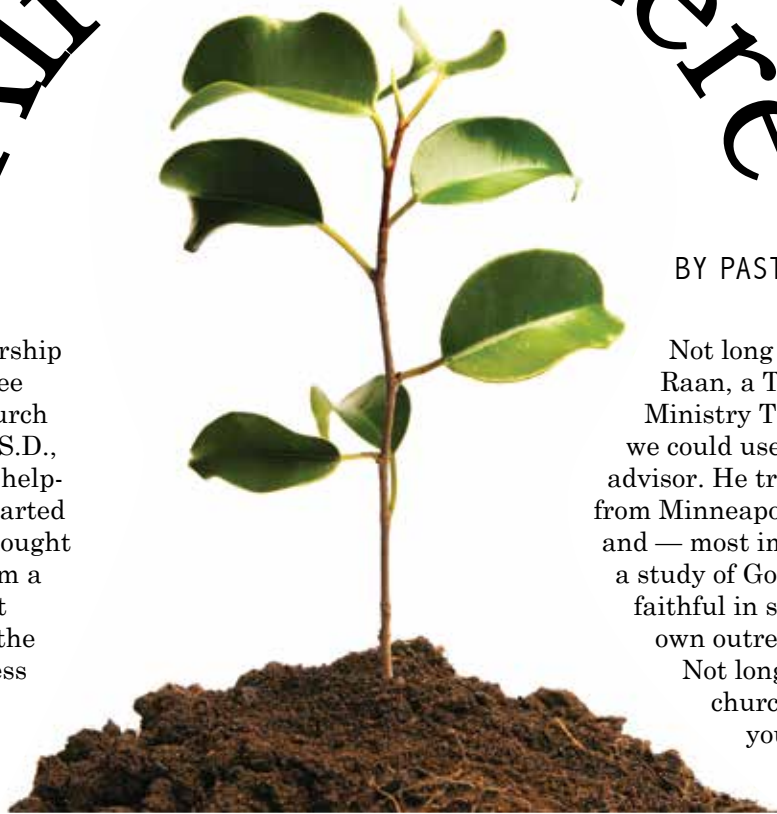
When the leadership of Calvary Free Lutheran Church in Arlington, S.D., prayed about helping a new AFLC church get started in a nearby community, we thought we were going to be doing them a favor. What we soon found out was that God would be using the experience to teach us and bless us far more than we expected.

That was two years ago. Since then Good Shepherd Free Lutheran in Madison, S.D., has grown and matured in many ways.

We started with about six families that came from other Lutheran churches, were upset by trends they noticed and wanted something different. They hoped to see a flood of like-minded congregants follow them into a quick and easy church start. There was some disappointment when friends they thought shared the same values didn't join them in their new venture. The soul-searching that followed yielded new insight; their vision has grown to see the lost and unchurched in their community as the mission field.

In the beginning, I was serving them every Sunday. Most of the men were quite hesitant to take an active role in the public services of the church. Yet they had a lot of Bible knowledge and some valuable experience in teaching and serving. Now many of the men have taken new steps in leading Sunday school, confirmation instruction and preaching. I visit two Sundays a month while they carry on the ministry with eagerness and excellence!

Last summer, a team from AFLBS came to lead vacation Bible school. One young man made a very strong impression on our whole congregation, both for his energetic service and his sincere love for the Lord and others.



Not long after VBS was over, Brent Raan, a Tioga, N.D., native now in the Ministry Training Institute, asked us if we could use him as a youth leader and advisor. He travels every other weekend from Minneapolis to organize activities and — most important — lead youths in a study of God's Word. He has been very faithful in supporting youths in their own outreach to friends and family.

Not long ago a teenaged girl with no church home began coming to the youth meetings. She joined the confirmation class and now has asked to be baptized into the Christian faith!

Then there is Lourine, a congregant who is preparing for her second trip to New Orleans to visit and counsel victims of Hurricane Katrina. Her first trip was only a few weeks ago and was such a blessing to her and to others that she is ready to go again. She is serving as a missionary from Good Shepherd to people who need to hear about the love of God in Christ Jesus. Her light is shining brightly for her Savior.

I know there were fear and doubts about reaching out to start this new church, but the great blessing we have discovered is that God was already there, working in the lives of people.

We are meeting in an old school, but a remodeling project likely to begin this summer means another change of address. The Lord has provided some financial backing in the form of an anonymous interest-free loan that may allow the congregation to purchase some property in the near future. Will we be moving to a permanent home? Only God knows. If the past is any indication, it will be a place of useful service to the Lord.

Mundfrom is interim pastor of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran Church, a church plant in Madison, S.D.



the Refiner

BY LORILEE MUNDFROM

I recently received an email detailing the following story:

Malachi 3:3: "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

This verse puzzled some women in a Bible study and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out about the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible study.

That week the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him work. She did not mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver. As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames are hottest to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot; then she thought again about Malachi 3:3. She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is

fully refined?" He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy ... when I see my image in it."

Perhaps you have read a similar story. How has the Lord used circumstances in your life to refine you over the past year? Perhaps physical trials of illness, job loss, family difficulties, or loss of loved ones have come your way. Whatever the trial, we know that God uses these times in the lives of believers to make us into whom He would have us be. He uses these circumstances to refine us, and He holds us there until He sees His image in us. Notice that the refiner of silver must watch the silver all the time it is in the fire so that it is not destroyed. We know that God is watching us all the time so that through His mercy and love we are not destroyed in the refining process, but made more like Him.

We can praise and thank Him for these times of what seems to the world to be great difficulty. As we seek His purpose and plan for our lives, we know that He wants us to be like Him. Therefore He allows us to go through the refining process.

Thank you to everyone in the AFLC and beyond who has prayed for me during these past months since having infection difficulties with my knee replacement. God has taught me much about His faithfulness and His grace through this time. I would pray that the image of Christ would be seen in my life every day.

Mundfrom, president of the WMF, lives in Eugene, Or.

2007 ARC retreats

Students registering 30 days prior to a youth camp will receive a free t-shirt

January 16-18

Pastors and Wives' Retreat

February 2-4

SidexSide
(grades 7-12)

February 2-4

Sno Daze
(grades 4-7)

February 16-18

Couples' Retreat

March 30-April 1

Women's Retreat

April 20-22

Men's Retreat

June 24-29

Fire Up Youth Camp
(grades 4-7)

June 29-30

Kids' Camp
(grades 1-3)

July 22-28

Family Camp

Sept. 24-26

Classics' Retreat

Register now for youth retreats in early February

Students, register now for SidexSide and Sno Daze, the annual winter AFLC youth retreats hosted by the Association Retreat Center. Scheduled for Feb. 2-4, the retreats are for students in seventh through twelfth grades.

The 2007 theme is "Rock Solid," from I Corinthians 3:11. Pastor Jim Ritter, Ryan Chase and Jason Gudim are special speakers for SidexSide, while Pastor Wade and Michele Mobley will speak at the Sno Daze retreat.

Winter activities will include broom-ball, basketball, volleyball, skiing, and snow tubing.

The cost is \$85 per student and \$40 per counselor. For information on registration, visit the ARC web site at www.arc-aflc.org. An online registration form is available. For more information, contact the ARC at 1 (800) 294-2877 or email arcregistration@centurytel.net.

AFLC Memorials November

AFLBS

Ruth Johnson, Virginia Jacobson, Ruby Holmaas, Ruth Eide

AFLTS

Ruth Johnson

Home Missions

Bernie Teske, Eddy Ege, Nancy Berseth, Merrill Stennes

Miriam Infant Home

Leota Elkins

Parish Education

Ada Solberg

WMF

Phyllis Johnson, Robert Boyer, Kenneth Tweed

World Missions

Ruth Johnson, John Lamb, Leota Elkins, Kenneth Tweed, Comart Peterson

... in honor of

AFLTS

Pastor Glenn & Barbara Larsen

Parish Education

Esther Larson, Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Kirk Thorson, Dave & Charlotte Fruehauf

Members of the Coordinating Committee accepted a resolution of affiliation from **Acts 2 Lutheran Church**, a new congregation in Wales, Wis. The congregation is currently served by lay leadership.

Correction: Registration for the Classics' Retreat at the ARC Sept. 24-26 is at 5 p.m. The time was incorrectly printed in a brochure mailed by the ARC.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Nov. 30, 2006

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN NOV	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$325,700	\$30,069	\$299,069	92
Youth Ministries	57,949	3,955	52,892	91
Evangelism	98,330	3,188	76,630	78
Parish Education	96,477	13,016	87,625	91
Seminary	189,224	14,409	170,692	90
Bible School	296,257	23,392	288,826	97
Home Missions	293,287	24,373	241,581	82
World Missions	260,933	20,937	213,413	82
Personal Support	376,641	36,808	410,393	109
TOTALS	\$1,944,798	\$170,148	\$1,841,120	92
TOTALS 2005	\$1,860,474	\$160,744	\$1,766,848	95

Goal 92%

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.

encouragecreativity

SMALL CONGREGATIONS CAN
GIVE ARTISTS OPPORTUNITIES
TO DEVELOP THEIR GIFTS

Soon after his birth in 1674 it was clear that Isaac Watts was uniquely gifted. He learned Latin at age 5, Greek at 9, French at 11 and Hebrew at 12. He also displayed a special talent for writing poetic verse. He had a problem, though. This gifted young man was greatly disturbed by the state of congregational singing in the English-speaking churches of his day. He said, "The singing of God's praise is the part of worship most closely related to heaven; but its performance among us is the worst on earth."



Pastor Craig Johnson

Watts' father responded to his son's complaints by challenging him to "write something better for us to sing." And that is what he did.

During his lifetime Watts wrote more than 600 hymns and is now known as the father of English hymnody.

In his day Watts was known as a rebel. The English-speaking church of 1700 considered it an insult to God to sing any words other than the actual words of Scripture. Ponderous metrical psalms were the only songs permitted to be sung.

Watts wrote new songs, with words based on biblical truths, that were not direct quotes of Scripture. They were new versions of the psalms with inspiring and expressive style.

Critics called his hymns, "Watts' Whims." Tempers flared and churches split over the issue of singing "humanly composed" music. Attempts were made to compromise by using the psalm setting during the early part of the service and a humanly composed hymn at the end, during which time people could leave or refuse to sing.

It is hard for us to imagine, 300 years later, that hymns like "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" were at one time considered radical and controversial contemporary music. It causes us to wonder, if Jesus doesn't return during the next 100 years, what will be the old standards of church music in 2107? We're also reminded that disagreements over what kind of music to sing in church are not new.

It is possible some of the songs Christians will still be singing in 100 years are ones written today by Michael

Card, a Christian musician, songwriter and author. He got his start as an artist when he was going to college. He was attending a small church. Each Sunday he was the special music. The pastor would tell him the text and theme of the upcoming message and Card would write a song to go with it. Some weeks the congregation gently and lovingly let him know that song wasn't something he needed to do again. Other weeks the congregation made it clear that song was "a keeper." The congregation gave him the op-

The congregation gave him the opportunity to use his gift, develop his creativity and grow as a Christian artist and musician.

portunity to use his gift, develop his creativity and grow as a Christian artist and musician.

Megachurches welcome Michael Card today, but they didn't when he was just starting out as a songwriter. It was a small congregation that gave him the chance to learn, be creative and explore God's calling on his life. It is understandable that in the megachurch an artist or musician must have experience and well-developed talent before they are permitted in front of the big crowd. It is the small congregation that can give artists and musicians opportunities to try new things and develop their gifts.

Moses told the Israelites, "See the Lord has chosen Bazalel ... he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge ... to engage in all kinds of artistic craftsmanship" (Exodus 35:30-33). Moses recognized someone to whom God had given special artistic ability. He wanted the group to appreciate the gift and provide the opportunity for it to be used.

Isaac Watts had a father who challenged and encouraged him to write music. Michael Card had a small congregation. Is there a painter or a poet, an actor or a craftsman, a musician or a writer God would have you and your congregation encourage today?

association retreat center

enhancing the Arts

BY MIKE FISK

Steve and I sat sipping coffee and talking in a local restaurant. He was there at the urging of some well-meaning friends who wanted him to turn his life over to Christ. Steve is an artist who enjoys graphic design and is involved in art shows across the country.

He opened the conversation about spiritual things by saying, "So, all my friends are telling me I should accept Jesus. Why? I'm a good person. I mean, I've done a few things wrong like anyone else, but I don't understand what the big deal is."

As we continued to talk I learned that he had "no problem" with Jesus. He believed He was God's Son, and readily accepted the scriptural truths of His death, burial and resurrection. Still, he was reluctant when it came to the point of asking Jesus to come into his life.

Sensing this, I asked him, "So Steve, you have agreed with everything I've said about Christ, yet you seem apprehensive about making a commitment to Him. Can I ask why?"

"Well, Pastor, I'm an artist and I really enjoy it. I love all kinds of art and, well ..."

I suddenly realized what the problem was.

"Steve, are you afraid that if you turn your life over to Christ, He may not let you be involved in art?"

He seemed relieved that I had spoken the words he was struggling to get out.

"Yeah, my friends have told me I need to give everything over to Jesus and He'll change my life. He'll take all the old away and I'll be new. I like who I am. I admit I'm

not perfect, but I don't want to give up who I am and what I do."

Psalm 139:13-14 declares, "I am created by God. I am knit together. I am fearfully and wonderfully made!" Those are definitely words describing an artist in the truest sense of the word. I used this passage and others to show Steve that giving our lives to Christ won't deter our ability to create. Just the opposite happens. Adding Christ to art is like adding salt to food. It enhances its flavor.

The Old Testament is proof that God can use art in any form (drama, music, paintings, interpretive dance, and more) to get His message across, because art in its various forms speaks differently to different people. To say that some art forms are good and some bad limits God's ability to speak to the diversity of His creation.

Here at the ARC we are blessed with many different groups of people from various cultures and social and denominational backgrounds. It's exciting to watch how each group uses various forms of art to minister to their people. Art in its various forms can be used of God to reach across generational and cultural lines to show others the love of Christ.

Fisk is editor of the Association Retreat Center's newsletter, "The ARC-ives." The ARC is located in Osceola, Wis.

