## THE LUTHERAN SADOR



## [Encouraging Word] Talking to the ceiling



Liz Johnson **Living Hope** St. Michael, MN

I can't physically hear God and I can't see Him, so it's hard to tell if He's even there, listening. talk to my best friends every day. We tell each other everything. I know a ton about them, and they know a ton about me. When a day goes by that I don't get to talk to one of them, I really miss it. I

It should be the same way with God, with prayer. It should be, but for me, it's not. There have been lots of days when I've forgotten to spend any time with God. The sad thing is that I don't miss it nearly as much as I miss talking to my friends. I barely even think twice about it. God knows me better than anyone else ever will. He knows me better than I know myself. He's interested in my life. I should want to talk to Him as much as possible. So why don't I?

Sometimes I feel like prayer isn't a conversation between God and I — it's a speech from me to the ceiling. I can't physically hear God and I can't see Him, so it's hard to tell if He's even there, listening. I don't think I'm the only one who feels this way. As much as I feel like God isn't there and isn't listening, He is. He promises to listen.

There are a few times when I don't want to listen to my friends, and there are most likely times when they don't want to listen to me, either. God always will listen. He tells us in Jeremiah 29:12, "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." Psalm 102:17 says, "He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; He will not despise their plea." Not only does He listen, He responds.

James 5:12 says, "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise." I tend to only want to pray when I'm having a really bad day or going through something hard. If my friends called me only when they wanted to vent or were really depressed I would feel like they didn't really appreciate my friendship they only wanted me to listen to all their problems. I don't want to treat God like that. Ephesians 6:18 says, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." All occasions. Not just the times when I'm sad or angry. God wants me to talk to Him no matter what I'm going through.

Another doubt I've had about prayer is that it never works. Okay, so God listens — but will He do anything about my prayer? Will it get answered or is it some sort of comfort thing where letting it out will just make me feel better? James 5: 15-16 tells us, "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." That last part really sticks out. Prayer isn't weak, it doesn't go unheard and it doesn't go unanswered. Prayer works.

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## UTHERANAMBASSADOR

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## **Sound Bites**

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

> — Martin Luther "The Freedom of a Christian"

The work of God can only be carried on by the power of God. The church is a spiritual organism fighting spiritual battles. Only spiritual power can make it function as God ordained.

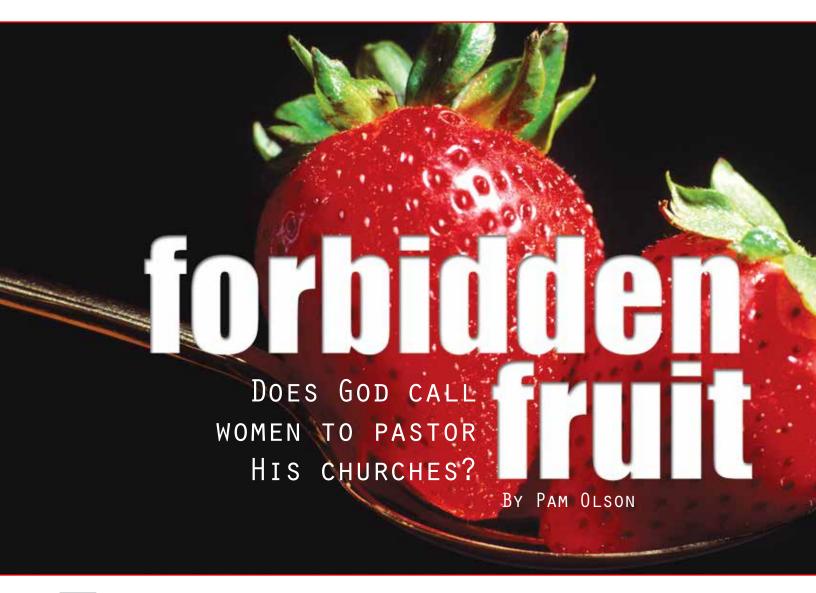
— Jim Cymbala

Holding the church to its historic faith, both in its practices and institutions, is a necessary corrective. But shouldn't it be done in love and with understanding, showing grace instead of rancor? The more confident people are of the truth, the more grace they exhibit to those who don't agree.

- Charles Colson "A Dangerous Grace"

Authentic Christianity does not call for defensive responses, but a vulnerable spirit that we might be taught by the Spirit. ... True Christianity calls us to complement one another, not to compete.

— Joseph Stowell "Perilous Pursuits"



"LET ME LEAD YOUR PEOPLE!" WAS THE CRY OF MY HEART.

I WAS YOUNG AND HAD JUST FINISHED WATCHING THE
MOVIE, "THE TEN COMMANDMENTS." I REMEMBER LIFTING MY
HANDS TOWARD HEAVEN AND ASKING GOD TO USE ME AS HE
USED MOSES TO LEAD THE ISRAELITES OUT OF BONDAGE.

"Use me to lead people into the life and freedom in Christ," I cried. I wanted my life to count. I wanted my life to have purpose. So I set myself on a journey with the Lord. Committed. Devoted to Him.

I was a product of the 1970s, the era of women's lib when slogans like, "Free to be who you want to be," and "Whatever a man can do, a woman can do ... better" defined an emerging generation of women. Because of these secular teachings, along with a growing group of seminarian women who would work with my local church, I felt a call into full-time ministry in my teenage years.

My pastor encouraged me along this path. He allowed me time in front of the congregation to read Scripture, children's sermons, and occasional homilies.

I got involved in national-level church functions, where I was exposed to even more ordained women, who



I respected and took cues from. While attending college, people would ask me, "What's your major?" I would respond, "Elementary education, but I'm really heading to seminary to be a pastor." My sights were on the Lord and doing His work.

While in college, I met a man, Kevin Olson, and I told him of my love for the Lord and my ambitions to be a pastor. He, too, planned on going into full-time ministry for the Lord. Our first date was a visit to Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. As we drove onto the campus, I thought of the hundreds of men and women who were trained in Holy Scripture. This was the place that would train me, equip me to be fully used by God. We were given a tour of the campus and sat

in on a class. I was captivated, asked questions ... Kevin fell asleep.

After Kevin and I were married, we moved to a small community in Iowa. It had two churches available to us. We chose to worship where a husband and wife served together as pastors, whom we got to know very well. As we communicated on a personal level with them, I started to see everyday problems with the concept of women serving as a pastor of a church. Just as God was revealing this to me, Kevin and I were relocated to Shakopee, Minn., where God directed our footsteps to a newly formed AFLC church. After sitting through a service, we came out knowing that we had not heard the Word of God so clearly preached in a long time. As we continued to attend church there, I soaked in all that Pastor Walter Johnson could teach me. I desired to be a strong pastor like him!

Then, BOOM! God spoke His Word to my heart, when no one in all my years had led me in His truth — specifically, three passages of Scripture.

I Timothy 2:11-12, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."

I Corinthians 14:34-35,40, "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says ... for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly

And I Corinthians 11:3, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."

My heart sank. I was confused. I was sure the Lord wanted me in ministry. He gifted me — a woman! I wrestled with the Lord. I reasoned, God used Miriam, Deborah and Anna. He would use me. I knew I needed to search Scripture to find truth and a place where I could find rest on this issue. Surely, I did not want to step outside the authority of God and His headship.

Could I look at the one fruit in the middle of the garden that I could not have and be content to have all the others? After doing a study on women of the Bible, reading the Danvers Statement (www.cbmw. org), seeing women in the pulpit and doing various kinds of ministry, I realized that it was my pride that was causing me to struggle with this issue.

I concluded that women are called by God to minister to His people. We are all called. Colossians 3:16-17 says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another will all wisdom ... Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus." However, I became convinced that women should not serve in the role of pastor or leader of the church. Women are effective in nurturing and ministering, but women should have no authority of headship in the church.

I believe this is God's protection for women. He is not hindering us. There are hundreds of opportunities for ministry. God has His perfect line of authority, and we must trust and submit to Him. In doing so, we find joy in serving, where our heart cry can be, "Use me, Lord, to lead people into the life and freedom in Christ."



Olson is a member of Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn. Her husband, Kevin, is an ordained pastor.



## WHY DO WE BAPTIZE BABIES? AS A FATHER OF FIVE, I, ALONG WITH MY WIFE, HAVE HAD TO CONTEMPLATE THIS QUESTION. THANKFULLY, GOD'S WORD IS VERY CLEAR ON THIS MATTER.

All humanity comes into this world deserving condemnation. No one can escape this fact. The Bible teaches us that by nature we are all children of God's wrath (Ephesians 2:3). We all are born sinners, "brought forth in iniquity," as David said in Psalm 51:5. This is the case for all who have been born since Adam and Eve's fall into sin and will be the case until Christ returns. Babies are not born innocent and pure as the world would like it to be, but as sinners in rebellion against God. Most parents have seen this very early on in their children when they throw temper tantrums that begin immediately after birth. We all come into this world wanting things done our way, and wanting them done now. We all come into this world deserving condemnation, not only because of the sin we commit later in life, but because we are by nature sinners. There is no hope in the ways man has dreamed up to save himself. Left to ourselves, none of us have any hope of escaping God's righteous judgment and wrath.

God provided the only way to be saved from His just condemnation of mankind for their sin against Him. God's only son, Jesus Christ, died on the cross for the sins of the world. A person must be born again or, in other words, become one of God's children to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). This is not only true of adults, but of babies. This new birth comes from God, not from man. By the grace of God, those who receive Jesus Christ — have faith in Him — and His work on the cross are born again. As John 1:13 states, those who are born again, are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." God does this, not by arbitrarily zapping people with salvation, but through His means. He brings salvation to a condemned human race and sustains the faith of each believer in this dead world through His Word and sacraments. They are, in man's eyes, the epitome of foolishness (I Corinthians 1:18-31), but a great treasure to all believers.

The Word and the sacraments (baptism, the Lord's Supper) are not just meant for and needed by adults, but by those of all ages, including babies. It has been with great awe and thankfulness that my wife and I have brought each of our five children to be baptized. The Bible teaches that it is not just a washing of water symbolizing a new life, but that it is water connected with God's Word — and it gives new life. It grants faith in Christ. An infant's need for salvation is just as real as

the need of the most vicious criminal. Christ died for all, and all need the forgiveness that comes through His death on the cross. A person must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God, and God's Word has told us that this happens in baptism (John 3:5). Through baptism, babies are born again and enter into the kingdom of God. Through baptism, they are buried and raised up in Christ (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). Their sins are forgiven and they have life because of Christ's death on the cross.

I do not have to guess what would happen to my little children if they would die. I know they would be in heaven, because God has clearly stated that they are brought into His kingdom through baptism. Baptism is not man's way of reaching to God, but God's means of reaching man, even infants. God uses baptism to accomplish His will and His way, not man's will or man's way. Who are we to neglect the means God has given to carry out His Great Commission?

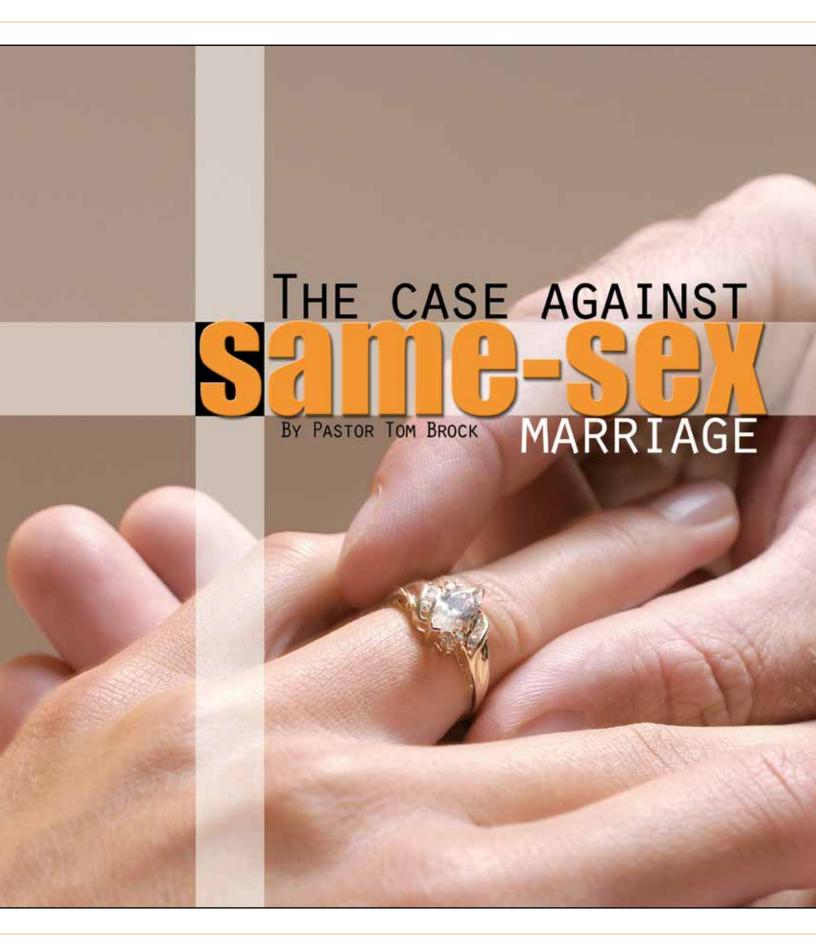
The Great Commission tells us to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). God wants all to be saved and become His disciples. What a privilege it is to be part of God's plan in making disciples of all nations.

Baptism is not the end of faith for a child, of course, but the glorious beginning of a walk with the living God. By the grace of God, baptized children will grow closer to Him throughout their lives as they learn about Jesus and as His Spirit continues to work through His Word and sacraments.

So, why do we baptize babies? As I look around, I find that maybe the question that needs contemplation is, "As Christians, why do we neglect the gracious means God has given, both Word and sacrament?" God is so good. To Him be the glory, great things He has done!



Peterson, a 1993 graduate of AFLBS and a member of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D. For a list of baptism resources, please see page 19.



## HOW CAN YOU BE AGAINST A LOVING, COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP? DON'T YOU BELIEVE ALL PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS? DON'T WE KNOW MORE ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY TODAY THAN THE WRITERS OF THE BIBLE?

Doesn't God call us to include all people in the Church? Aren't you making homosexuality the worst sin? Would God condemn someone for the way he or she is born? What is a Christian to do?

You have heard these questions in recent months. Last summer was a low point in American history when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws in Texas (and nationally) and the Episcopal Church USA installed a practicing homosexual as bishop. The Supreme Court majority stated their ruling on the Texas statute would not lead to homosexual marriage. In a few months it became evident they were wrong as people lined up in San Francisco, Portland and elsewhere to be "married".

How are we as Christians to respond to the above questions? Let us look at each.

How can you be against a loving, committed relationship? The answer is that we are not, but same-sex behavior is not loving. Homosexual men live between six and 20 years less than men in the general public. To engage in homosexual behavior is not only dangerous for our eternity (I Corinthians 6:9-11), it will cut short life here on earth as well. That is not loving.

Don't you believe all people should have equal rights? Yes, but marriage is not a right. It is a privilege reserved for one man and one woman. A man and three women do not have the right to marry in America. A father and a daughter cannot marry, nor two "loving, committed" brothers. And endorsing bisexuality would necessitate allowing for three people to marry.

Don't we know more about homosexuality today than the writers of the Bible? If one believes that the ultimate Author of the Bible is the Holy Spirit, the answer is "No." Every time the Bible mentions homosexuality, it is condemned (see Genesis 19:1-9, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Deuteronomy 22:5, Romans 1:26-27, I Corinthians 6:9-11, I Timothy 1:8-10, Jude 6-7). To say we know more than the Bible on this issue is — to put it bluntly — arrogant.

Doesn't God call us to include all people in the Church? No. The Bible is clear that if someone persists in impenitent sin, that person is not to be part of the Church until repentance occurs (see I Corinthians 5:9-13). We should treat the sin of homosexual behavior the same way we treat any other sin. If there is contrition, there is forgiveness through Christ. If there is no repen-

tance, church discipline is appropriate (Matthew 18).

Aren't you making homosexual behavior the worst sin? No, but we maintain that it is a sin. Unfortunately, many in mainline denominations have compromised on this

Would God condemn someone for the way he or she is born? The truth is we are all born sinners because of Adam and Eve. But not even secular psychologists are willing to say that people are born homosexual because there has been no evidence for a "gay gene." More likely the cause of same-sex attraction is a breakdown between the child and the same-sex parent early in life (ages 3-6), and proper gender identification is not formed. Whatever the cause, people who experience same-sex attraction are called upon to lead chaste lives. Many have found help in dealing with same-sex attraction through groups like Exodus International.

Lastly, what is a Christian to do? I suggest three things. First, pray. If ever America needed prayer, it is today. These last few months we have seen America become more godless than ever. Much as I hope the Supreme Court will rule that we can keep "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, perhaps we no longer deserve to use those words. Pray that the Holy Spirit would bring repentance and revival to America. Then once more we can be "under God."

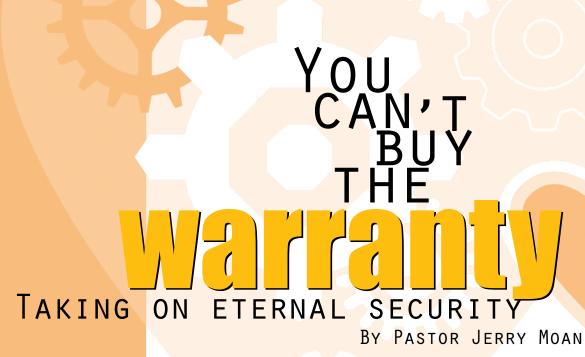
Second, act. Call your legislator and ask him/her to support the marriage amendment to the Constitution, defining marriage as between one man and one woman. And make sure you vote for people who uphold the traditional definition of marriage.

Last, assist groups that are helping people out of the homosexual lifestyle. Get a speaker from Exodus to come to your church or add this group to your mission budget.

Three years ago my congregation, Hope Lutheran, left the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America over this and other issues. I want to say a big thank you to the AFLC for continuing to take a biblical stand on theological and moral issues of the day. It is so good to be among the evangelistic, Bible-believing Christians of the AFLC!



Pastor Brock serves Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.



## BIBLE CAMP WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR ME THAT YEAR. IT ALL STARTED WHEN I HEARD SOMEONE IN THE BUNK NEXT TO ME CRYING.

Our cabin was already strangely quiet after the "lights out!" call, even though it was jammed with two dozen pre-teen boys.

Two guys, Todd and Brad, came to camp to have fun. Now they were experiencing major conviction. They realized they needed the Lord.

My adrenaline kicked into high. What should I do? "Want me to go with you to the chapel?" I offered. "Maybe Pastor Monseth will still be there."

They agreed. What a relief to see the lights still on in the chapel building; the Lord had been dealing with others that night as well. Pastor Francis Monseth greeted us warmly, and then led my two new friends to the Lord. It seemed like a taste of heaven to be able to share in their newfound joy in the Lord. They were off to a great start. But would it last?

The Bible clearly teaches that the believer's security is in Christ. "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (I John 5:12). Both *saving* and *keeping* us are the gracious work of God. And our Lord is able to keep us from stumbling (Jude 24). Jesus assures that no one will snatch His sheep out of His hand (John 10:28). These are just a few of the gospel assurances in which the believer rejoices.

But Scripture (specifically, the law) also warns of the awful potential we possess to resist the work of God to say "no" to His Holy Spirit. Does God remove our will once we come to Christ? The sad reality is that we may choose to live in disobedience. We may persist in unbelief. Our spiritual life may be choked, and we may become so entangled in our sins that we drift away and eventually fall from grace, forfeiting our salvation. The Scripture is unmistakably clear that there is no salvation for one who turns away from Christ.

The Biblical evidence for this is overwhelming: Through the Old Testament prophets, the Lord speaks of the sobering reality of "a righteous man" turning away from his righteousness: "He shall die in his sin" (Ezekiel 3:20). In Zechariah 1, we hear the call to "return" to the Lord.

In the New Testament parable of the sower, the seeds and the soil, what is it that becomes shriveled up or choked out? Jesus says, "They believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).

John's Gospel contains a similar metaphor relating to eternal life. Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; ... If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned" (see John 15:1-6). The words, "in Me" would suggest that one who is saved can be cut off from the Vine. This is why abiding in Christ is so crucial. The results of not abiding are disastrous.

Again, Jesus tells us, "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling" (John 16:1). The Greek verb for "stumbling" (skandalizo) is much more serious than we may think. It's not talking about the experience of tripping over a pebble or a crack in the sidewalk and then catching one's balance. Rather, this word is related to the noun (skandalon) that pictures the trip lever on a death trap. This kind of stumbling spells disaster. It is a fatal stumbling. Other translations do well to render the verb, "go astray" (NIV) or "falling away" (ESV).

What does Paul write to the believers with whom he was in contact? "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13, ESV). He further exhorts, "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith" (II Corinthians 13:5, ESV).

Paul is amazed at how quickly (or easily) the Galatians were deserting Christ for a different gospel (1:6). What would be the end result of such a desertion? Salvation? Surely not! He says later in this same letter, "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4, ESV).

The Apostle urges Timothy to "fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have

rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith" (I Timothy 1:18-19). Indeed, he says, this is what we can expect as the return of Christ draws near: "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Timothy 4:1).

The epistle to the Hebrews, perhaps more than any other book of the Bible, speaks of the peril of drifting from the faith. "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:1-3). Again, 3:7 warns of developing an "evil unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God."

Hebrews 6:4-8 also describes in remarkable detail the peril of a true believer who has fallen away. Chapter 10 adds that if we turn away from Christ, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (10:26-31). We cannot afford to treat casually this whole matter of salvation. For if we "shrink back" into unbelief, God cannot take pleasure in us. To do so is to "shrink back to destruction" (10:35-39).

Peter warns of the tragedy for a believer to be "entangled in" and "overcome" by "the defilements of the world" (II Peter 2:20-22).

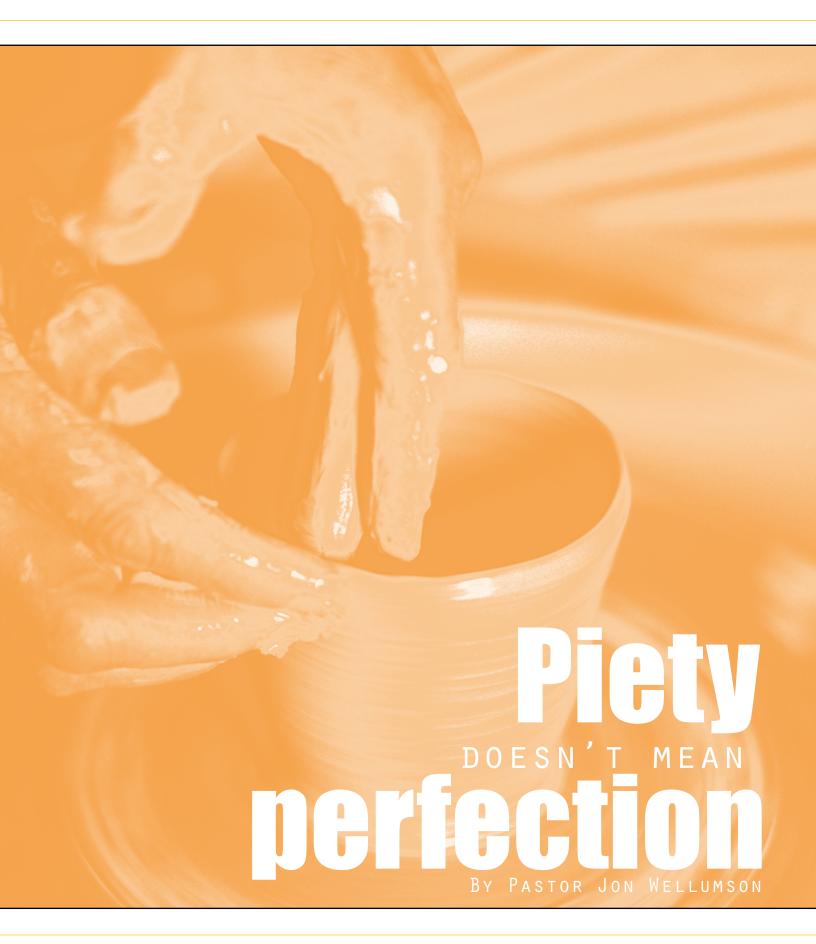
Finally, our Lord promises, "He who overcomes ... I will not erase his name from the book of life" (Revelation 3:5). God's Word calls us to be faithful unto death, holding fast to that which we have received (Revelation 2:10). "Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

Biblical Lutheran theology proclaims the need for the message of both the law and the gospel. Through Scripture, the siren of the law sounds loud and clear. Who can ignore it? It is sheer folly to place *false* security in an unbiblical doctrine of eternal security. Thankfully, God has revealed His gospel to us for this purpose — so we can *know* that we have eternal life (I John 5:11-15).

Are you troubled by some sin? Wrestling with dark doubts in your life? Then, look to JESUS — take it to Him! Latch on to Christ's promise of complete forgiveness and cleansing through the blood shed for you. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). Trusting in Jesus, you are secure.



Pastor Moan is an instructor at AFLBS, Plymouth, and attends Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn. All Scripture is NAS unless otherwise noted.



## SOMETIMES, CHRISTIANS WOULD LIKE TO ESCAPE THE FACT THAT HOW THEY LIVE — ACTIONS, WORDS, THOUGHTS, AND ATTITUDES — VISIBLY REVEALS WHAT THEY BELIEVE.

Recently, some media outlets have focused on politicians who, though they belong to the Roman Catholic Church, consistently campaign and vote pro-abortion. Some Roman Catholics are asking that these politicians not be allowed communion. Why? Because integral to being Roman Catholic is the belief that human life is sacred. In other words, the actions of these politicians reveal what they truly believe. And their belief systems are opposed to that of Roman Catholics.

Before we join in the sport of tearing others apart, it would be good for us to look at our own lives to see if we could stand the same scrutiny. Do we worry? Then we believe in a god who is not big enough to take care of our needs, does not care about our needs, or doesn't know what our needs are. Do we ever act or speak with vengeful motives? Do you know someone who deserves to get what they have coming? Then we believe in a god who doesn't care about or understand justice like we do. Do we ever tell little white lies in order to avoid offense, consequences or certain issues? That means we believe we have the right to make our own reality when reality is not convenient for us. We believe we have the right to act as if we are creators rather than created ones. We are our own gods.

If we are honest, we must confess that our sin problem is a lot deeper and more profound than we would like to admit. If there is such a thing as Christian piety, it certainly is not perfection. Indeed, it is far from it. Since how we live shows what we really believe, then what is it true Christians believe?

First, mankind was created by God, who is eternal, all knowing, all powerful, everywhere present, holy, just, merciful and triune — one God, three persons. He created all that exists.

Second, mankind is a part of creation made to have a personal relationship with God. This means voluntarily recognizing God in our living (fear, love and trust in God).

Third, because of Adam's decision to not recognize God, all who have descended from him are fallen. They do not and cannot fear, love and trust in God. We are eternally separated from our Creator

with no remedy from ourselves.

Fourth, we believe that God in His mercy has provided forgiveness of our sins through the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through this forgiveness, He has restored our relationship with Him.

Fifth, we can truly know God and His salvation for us because He has revealed them through His Son and the Bible, which are inseparable.

Sixth, Christians believe these truths.

How we live shows what we really believe. So what does the Christian life look like? To put it succinctly, Christians look like sinners saved by grace. It is what they are. Christians do not use the fact that they are sinners to excuse their sins. Instead, the realization that they are sinners drives them to cry out for mercy. They find rest from sin **only** in the gracious love of God in Christ Jesus.

The Christian life is first of all humble and totally dependent on the mercy of God (Psalm 51, Isaiah 6:1-5, Daniel 9:4-19, Luke 5:8, Romans 7:7-25 etc.). As sinners become aware that God has responded to sin with love and mercy beyond what they can comprehend, so, in mercy, they strive to lead fellow sinners to God's mercy in Christ.

The Christian life is also marked by love that flows from knowing God's love (I John 4:19). Love is not just sentimental feelings about God and our mankind. Rather, it is acting the way God acts and has revealed in Christ that we should act (Matthew 22:34-40, John 13:34).

Because of what Christians believe, they live repentance (turning from sin in revulsion) and faith by believing in the one true God and life-giving Savior. To not live in repentance and faith is to not be a Christian. Actions do not make a Christian, but being a Christian determines actions. For a Christian, piety is not an option; it is the natural result of believing truth.



Pastor Wellumson serves Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D.

### [Free Lutheran Youth]

## rescue efforts

cue from the Roman government, not the

of this life and lose focus of the work God

wants to do in us and is doing before our

own eyes! When Christ died on the cross,

the rescue plan was being fulfilled. Satan and his domain of darkness were defeated,

and we were given the opportunity to be

I remember hearing the story of a cou-

ple of Brazilian sailors who were lost at sea

in a small boat. They floated for days, and

the scorching sun had finally driven one of them to reach overboard and drink some of

the deadly saltwater. To his surprise, it was

fresh water all around them. In that particular area of the east coast of South Ameri-

ca, the Amazon River flows into the ocean

miles out into the sea! The sailors had

you know who are unaware of the

with such force that its fresh water extends

life-saving water all round them and could have perished if not for that last foolish,

but successful act. How many lost souls do

affect on our sinful natures. We need God's

Word to show us and those we witness to

the need for rescue. Will we be distracted

as those who condemned Christ to die on

the cross? Will we take our salvation for

granted and cease growing in our faith? Or

will we be controlled by the love of Christ

(II Corinthians 5:14) to carry out good

deeds and share the truth with others?

The domain of darkness has a powerful

soul-quenching water offered by Jesus?

delivered from it by faith in Christ.

power of sin over their lives. How easy it can

be for us today to get caught up in the needs



Cory Buck

here's an organization called the **International Rescue Committee** (IRC), which reaches out to refugees and other victims of oppression and violent conflict throughout the world. IRC strives to provide for the most basic needs of these victims: water, medical care, food, shelter, and sanitary needs. In addition, they will help people relocate to other countries and establish a new life. Without this assistance, women,

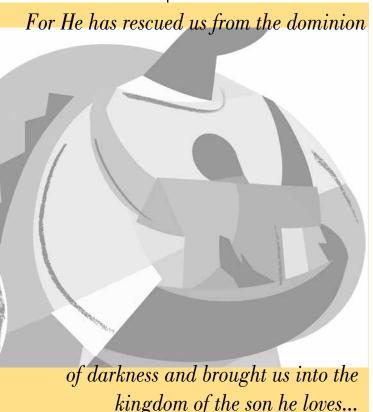
children, and other innocent victims would probably perish at a very young age due to preventable causes or continue to live in severe poverty.

How much greater are the rescue efforts displayed by God's own Son more than 2,000 years ago? He knows our basic need depravity and offers assistance that "qualified us to share in the inheritance of

— our spiritual the saints in

Rescue is the theme of FLY 2005, and we invite you to be a part of it by praying for the preparation of souls, coming to serve in some capacity, or encouraging others to attend with financial and prayer support.

Buck is a member of Grace Free Lutheran. Maple Grove, Minn., and first vice president of Free Lutheran Youth.



Colossians 1:13-14

light" (Colossians 1:12). The IRC's rescue plan is similar to salvation: God provides the sacrifice for our sin and delivers (relocates) us to the Kingdom of His Son, where we are given the opportunity to work for Him.

Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ," gave varying perspectives on rescue based on the Gospels. Many of the Jewish people in Christ's time were looking for res-

# Inderstanding Sverdring

By Loiell Dyrud

ome 155 years after the birth of Georg Sverdrup, a society named in his honor was organized last December in Fargo, N.D. Entitled "The Georg Sverdrup Society," the nonprofit organization was established to encourage the study and understanding of the New Testament congregation as understood and explained by Georg Sverdrup, the founder of the Lutheran Free Church (predecessor of the AFLC).

Sverdrup has been described as one of "the ablest theologians produced by Norwegian-American Lutheranism" by Eugene Fevold, a Luther Seminary church historian, and referred to by one of his contemporaries, John Evjen, as "the greatest Lutheran theologian that America has ever had."

Sverdrup (1848-1907) was born in Balestrand, Norway, a descendant of the famous family noted for pastors and members of Norway's parliament, *Storling*. His great-uncle Georg, for whom he was named, was president of the assembly that wrote Norway's first constitution in 1814. His uncle, Johan, was Prime Minister of Norway, and his father, H.U., was a pastor and also a member of parliament. An older brother, Jakob, followed in the family tradition by becoming a member of parliament and for a time holding a cabinet position as Norway's Minister of Education and Religion.

After graduating from the University of Oslo's school of theology, Sverdrup chose to come to America where he would devote his entire life to the task of building the New Testament congregation, unhindered by the restrictions of the State Church of Norway. In 1872, he was called to Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis, and he joined his close university friend Sven Oftedal on the faculty. Together they organized the Lutheran Free Church in 1897.

Though we regularly mention Sverdrup and are somewhat acquainted with his ideas through the "Fundamental Principles" that guide the AFLC, few have had access to his thoughts because the bulk of his work is written in Norwegian and has remained untranslated.

Between 1909 and 1912, Augsburg College Professor Andreas Helland collected and published a six-volume set of Sverdrup's writing under the title "Professor Georg Sverdrup's Samlede Skrifter I Udvalg." Yet, today, less than one volume has been translated into English. Faced with a diminishing knowledge of his work, the Sverdrup Society aims to renew an interest in his thought and writing.

To this end, one of the main goals of the society is to translate as much of his writing as possible. In addition, the Society intends to organize discussion groups, maintain a bibliography of his translated work, compile a bibliography of articles written about him, operate a Web site and publish a newsletter.

But, perhaps the most energetic venture of the society is to publish the "Sverdrup Journal," a yearly periodical intended to inform and promote an understanding of Sverdrup's work that will be sent to all dues-paying members. This issue's topic is: "Georg Sverdrup's Theology of the Congregation." Anyone interested in contributing to the journal should contact Pastor Robert Lee, editor, president@aflc.org.

The board of directors chosen last December includes: Loiell Dyrud, president; Dr. Francis Monseth, vice president; Pastor Martin Horn, secretary; Pastor Terry Olson, treasurer; and Pastor Robert Lee, editor. Other board members are Pastor Raynard Huglan and Tim Berntson.

All who are interested in understanding and preserving Sverdrup's heritage are encouraged to become members of the society. Annual dues are \$25, and proceeds will be used primarily for publishing the newsletter and journal. Current membership is approximately 50.

For a bibliography on this year's topic and further information regarding the society, contact Pastor Horn at 317 South Third St., Kenyon, MN 55946, or email mhorn@lakes.com.

### [World Missions]

## missionary messages

By Tom Caouette World Mission Committee

t was with much anticipation that I read my latest e-mail letters from our missionary families in Mexico and Brazil. I am always excited about their descriptions of the lives that are changed and the hearts that are given to Christ. After all, that is the reason our missionary families live in these parts of the world.

It is also interesting to note how the people are drawn to Christ. Sometimes it is through outreach such as the health and hygiene ministry for mothers conducted by Paul and Becky Abel in Curitiba, Brazil, or the Miriam Infant

Home and work farm for troubled teens overseen by Connely Dyrud in Campo Mourao, Brazil. Todd Schierkolk's English language classes open doors in Jerez, Mexico, as well.

I also glean valuable information from missionaries' prayer requests. All of our missionaries understand the power of prayer, and they are not afraid to request your support in that area. Please take special note and remember our missionaries in your prayers.

Consider how people are drawn to Christ because of the opportunities we now have to expand our ministry around the world. Compassion ministries such as infant homes and health care provide open doors to spread the message of Christ. The challenge we face lies in keeping these ministries focused on the primary purpose of our efforts. Our purpose is to make disciples, and compassion ministries unlock the doors to opportunities.

In Matthew 20:29-34 we read, "As Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' Jesus stopped and called them. 'What do you want me to do for you?' He asked. 'Lord,' They answered, 'we want our sight.' Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him."

Until the infant home was started in Brazil in the early 1990s, the focus of AFLC World Missions was in gospel training and church planting. Our purpose statement reflects that early vision and tends to keep us from entering into compassion ministry opportunities as they come along. World Mission Committee members would appreciate your feedback in this area. The Annual Conference may provide us the opportunity for that discussion.

I would encourage you to get on our missionaries' mailing lists. Wanda Jacobson, in the World Mission office, will be able to help by getting your e-mail or home address into our database. Just send her a note at the AFLC Headquarters or worldmis@aflc.org with either your home or e-mail address.

Romans 10:15 says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news." I might also add how wonderful it us for us to hear of the fruits of their efforts.



## PRAY FOR

#### BY CRAIG JOHNSON

hey live in a remote village in India. Their names are Rebekah and Naomi. They are 13 and 11 years old. When I visited their village I had the chance to meet them and their grandfather. He is a proud but concerned grandpa.

He believes his granddaughters are full of potential. You don't have to spend much time around the girls until you start to agree with him. They are sharp, friendly young people with an ambition to learn and grow.

Their grandfather is concerned they will have very limited opportunities if they stay in the village. They won't be able to get the education necessary to prepare for the tests that must be passed in order to get any higher education. For that reason they have been attending St. Paul's Lutheran School in Chirala, operated by the AFLC India. The village is too far away, so during the week the girls must live at the school. This involves expenses beyond what the family can afford, but it also provides opportunities.

The Lord has good plans for Rebekah and Naomi, plans to give them "hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). Pray that those plans might become a reality for them, and the many young people like them in the villages of India.

Numerous others came to me with prayer requests when I was in India. T. Syam Prasad is a pastor of an AFLC India congregation. He has had numerous health problems. The expenses may not seem great compared to medical costs in America, but when you live in a place without health insurance, and you have very limited income and a family to care for, the expenses can be overwhelming. Pray for him and his family as he tries to continue to serve his congregation. Pray for God to provide healing and financial help.

Pray for all the pastors, gospel workers and Bible women as they serve in India. Their congrega-



Four girls from St. Paul's Lutheran School, Chirala, India, stand near the school's bus. At right are Rebekah and Naomi.

tions are often made up of people who are struggling to simply survive and can do little to help support their pastor. A gift of \$30 a month goes a long way in helping to support workers there. Gifts can be given to the AFLC World Missions.

"Pray that we might have a congregation in our village where we can learn from the Bible," or, "Pray that we might have a church building some day where we can come and worship." I heard those simple requests more than once in India. They came after a meeting held in someone's yard or out on the road. They came from parents desiring for their children to be taught the Word of God. They came from people fearful persecution might come to their village some day soon. They came from people longing for encouragement and hope.

Let us pray for India.

www.aflcwomen.org

## Why have a WOC?

#### Women's Outreach Coordinator position will be put to vote at June national convention

As a board, we have been asking the **Lord that His** plan would be made plain to us and to all of our women. We want a spirit of unity in our WMF regarding this position ...

his year's devotional theme is on prayer and devotional life. Many times we allow ourselves to become so busy that we do not have an intimate time with God. The problem, many times, is our reluctance to choose to spend time in prayer and Bible reading. We need to shut out the complex world around us and open our hearts to the incredible joy that comes from devoting ourselves to the Lord.

The WMF leadership is waiting until this June at the WMF Convention to dis-



Jan Galland

cuss the position of Women's Outreach Coordinator (WOC). As a board. we have been asking the Lord that His plan would be made plain to us and to all of our women. We want a spirit of unity in our WMF regarding this position, which focuses on outreach, not administration. The WOC position is one-quarter time

with the possibility of increasing to half time as finances allow.

I sent out letters to several district presidents to get feedback on the WOC discussions held last fall at district rallies. Sandy Lehmann from Onarga, Ill., said, "The WOC should be the one to go to new congregations to explain to the women what the WMF is all about. She should be willing to help them get organized and feel a part of the big picture of the WMF."

I know the district presidents should do this, too. But everyone's lives are so busy. And this is a paid position, which, if made a full-time position, would give the WOC the freedom to travel when and where there is a need. Specifically, AFLC Home Mission churches are in need of a lot of guidance.

Vicki Johnson, district president, sent

me the notes of the discussion of the fall Minneapolis district rally at Cumberland. Wis. In summary: Feedback from churches that Faith Nelson (former WOC) visited was very positive. The WOC's purpose is to visit churches and explain to them, especially the new ones, what the WMF is all about and to help local groups with questions they may have. After Faith Nelson's visit to the Pacific Northwest churches, they communicated that ladies were more dedicated in their attendance at WMF meetings.

A count of hands was taken at the Cumberland rally, and a majority of the women were in favor of the WOC position. If each active WMF out of 250 churches helped cover mileage expenses, it would cover the position's needs. If each local WMF gave \$6.75 each month, the WOC position could be a quarter-time position.

Romans 12:5b says, "We are all parts of His one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we all are one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others."

Last fall the WMF received a Thrivent Financial for Lutherans grant of \$10,225 for "Renewal of AFLC Women's Missionary Federation, Part II." This money will be used in leadership development and evangelism outreach with an emphasis on prayer and devotional life. It is our prayer, as national officers, that each one of us will be revitalized to make our local, district and national meetings a time of really sensing the presence of the Holy Spirit. May we be unified and brought together through prayer and the study of God's Word. Through this we will draw other women to know Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

Galland is a member of Faith Free Lutheran. Shakopee, Minn.

## Spiritual Exhaustion

### By Brent Olson

eminary taught me a lot about "spiritual exhaustion." Not the kind where you are tired of Bible study and other Christians. But the kind where you recognize your sinfulness and can only fall down before God and ask for forgiveness solely because of what Jesus did on the cross.

We had to read a book in seminary called "A Faithful Guide to Peace with God," written by a good Swede named Carl Olof Rosenius. Rosenius taught me that trying to feel good about myself before daring to go to God in confession was tantamount to believing Jesus Christ's sacrifice wasn't quite good enough by itself; that, essentially, to go to God with any plea save the blood of Jesus was denying Jesus the sole honor of saving my soul. That was one of the most important lessons I've ever had to learn.

Another good lesson I learned in seminary came from a good German who the good Swede quotes in his book. Referring to the Apostle's Creed, Luther remarks, "I believe in the Holy Christian Church' is a statement of faith as well as the others." Another very important thing to

remember. In God's eyes these folks we pray and worship with however sinful they might seem to our eyes — are pure because of Jesus. And they needed to be treated as the holy children of



God whom they are.

Born on February 24, 1971, to two Norwegians (Helene and Rodger) with about an eighth of Swede in one of them (Rodger), I find myself now surrounded by many of Luther's ancestry. I'm currently in a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pa., finishing my internship under the tutelage of Pastor John Dennis and Pastor James Molstre, and looking

forward to continuing ministry here after graduation. Through this experience I have learned more about spiritual exhaustion and about other kinds of exhaustion, too. Mostly, I have clung to God's promise in II Corinthians 12:9 as if my life depended on it: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

After studying the best that man has both been thought and said — in the English language anyway - for four years at Wheaton College and then for two years after that at the University of St. Thomas, I am thrilled now to be preaching and teaching the best that has been both thought and said, period. I can think of no greater honor on this earth than to feed lambs and tend sheep in the green pastures of God's Word. I thank Jesus so much for this calling.

Brent Olson, Plymouth, Minn., will graduate this spring from AFLTS. He has accepted a call to serve Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., where he served during his internship.

### Congregation commissions medallions

Silverhill, Ala., church will celebrate centennial in 2005

Zion Lutheran Church, Silverhill, Ala., now in its 99th year of serving the Lord Jesus Christ, has anticipated its centennial celebration in 2005 by commissioning pewter medallions celebrating God's faithfulness to this church. The face of the medallion portrays the historic church while the reverse carries a message of God's faithfulness and love.

Visitors and guests may receive a medallion replica at Sunday morning worship services through Zion's centennial year.

### **Baptism resources:**

**Baptism: For You and Your Baby** \$2.25

Baptized into God's Family \$10.20 **Biblical Baptism \$2 Did the Apostles Practice Infant** 

Baptism? 25 cents

**Infant Baptism \$3** Welcome to the Family \$3.50

Your Baby and Baptism 50 cents Available from AFLC Parish Education (763) 545-5631 or parished@aflc.org





Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., hosted a National Day of Prayer breakfast on May 6. Keynote speaker for the event was Minnesota's Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer (left). Pastor James Johnson, AFLBS dean, served as master of ceremonies (above).

#### Mission home needs

The interior of the home provided for missionaries on furlough is furnished and kept in good condition by the Women's Missionary Federation. The following items are requested for the mission house:

- a used, newer piano in good condition: one that looks nice and sounds great
- a used portable sewing machine in good repair
- a new or slightly used microwave and blender

Other items may be needed. To help, please contact WMF National President Cheryl Skordahl at (763) 497-5863.



Pastor Duane Matz was installed on March 28 at Living Word Lutheran, Menasha, Wis. Pictured are AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee, who officiated at the service, Pastor Duane Matz, Mark Maciejewski and Mike Rieth.

## Summer Institute scheduled for August

Theme is 'Preaching Christ and Him Crucified'

"Preaching Christ and Him Crucified" is the theme of this year's Summer Institute of Theology, taking place Aug. 2-6 on the AFLTS campus in Plymouth, Minn. Classes offered include, "Themes of Exodus," by Pastor Phil Haugen, "Preaching the Old Testament," by Pastor Jerry Holmaas, "The Doctrine of Christ," by Dr. Francis Monseth, "Studies in I Corinthians," by Pastor Jerry Moan, and "History and Aims of the AFLC," by Pastor Robert Lee. For more information, contact the AFLTS office at (763) 544-9501, email aflts@aflc.org, or write to 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

### Galilee Bible Camp 2004 schedule

Lake Bronson, Minn.

#### Preteen Camp

June 22-27

Evening: Pastor Frank Cherney Morning: Pastor Jonathan and

Tamba Abel

Contact: Pastor Ken Hart (218)

782-2246

#### **Teen Camp**

June 27-July 2

Evening: Pastor Tom Olson Morning: Pastor Phil Haugen Contact: Pastor Ken Hart (218) 782-2246

#### **Family Camp**

July 5-9

Evening: Pastor Dale Finstrom Adults: Pastor Oliver Olson Missions: Pastor Jonathan and Tamba Abel

Youth: Pastor Tim Carlson Contact: Lyle Mattson (218) 782-

2310

## MTP reprints Ten Commandments, prints guidelines for youth workers

Mercy and Truth Publishers has reprinted the articles on the Ten Commandments originally printed in *The Lutheran Ambassador*. These reprints are available on the Internet and through the mail. Also, MTP has printed a booklet called, "Youth Group Guidelines" for youth workers. This can also be ordered and sent out on the Internet. Free will offerings will be accepted for the cost of the publications. Contact MTP at 19594 450th Street NW, Newfolden, MN 56738-9286. Or, call 218-874-2101.



Members of Word of Truth Lutheran, Glen Rose, Texas, stand inside their new sanctuary, dedicated on April 4.

### New building dedicated in Texas

embers of Word of Truth Free Lutheran, Glen Rose, Texas, praise God for the dedication of a new church building on April 4. Pastor Paul Nash, Home Missions director, flew down for the occasion and officiated at the Palm Sunday dedication. Like the challenge given Israel when Solomon dedicated the Temple, Nash called our congregation to humble rededication before God.

Word of Truth was founded six years ago as a Home Mission congregation of five families. Our first services were held in a un-air conditioned RV barn, though the sultry Texas summer quickly prompted search for a cooler location. God provided a rented meeting facility for Sunday morning services until the fall of 2003, when He opened the door to purchase land along a busy state highway. We were excited to have the shell of a metal

building up in time for Reformation services.

In March, FLAPS volunteers arrived to help finish the inside of the metal building. In one week the 40' x 50' shell was transformed from one big room into a dry-walled sanctuary with two classrooms and a kitchen. What a difference! We are deeply grateful to the men who gave sacrificially of their time and talents. Not only did they build a building, they tremendously uplifted our congregation spiritually. Also, we thank our AFLC church body for their support throughout this building process.

It is our fervent desire to serve as a Texas extension of AFLC theology, fellowship and conviction. We hope any of you visiting the North Texas area will stop in and worship the Lord Jesus with us.

— Christie Ballmann

### Furnishings still needed for library

The following supplies are still needed for the Francis W. Monseth Library, on the campus of the AFLC Schools, Plymouth, Minn.

One computer (\$200), two magazine shelves (\$550 each), three tables (\$220 each), two computer

desks (\$250 each), television (\$150), 20 upright chairs (\$1,000), and a coffee table (\$80).

For more information on the current needs, contact Esther Moberg at (763) 412-2028. So far \$600 has been given to the fund.

Chaplain John Rieth was recently hired as manager for the Pastoral Care Department at Altru Hospital in Grand Forks, N.D. Chaplain Rieth, who has been at Altru for eight years, served as a parish pastor for more than 20 years in the AFLC before entering chaplaincy in 1993. The Rieths are members of Christ the King Free Lutheran, East Grand Forks, Minn.

Members of the Coordinating Committee received four congregations on April 26. Three of the congregations form a three-point parish in western North Dakota and are served by Pastor Richard Melchert. They include **Golgotha Lutheran**, Golden Valley, **Immanuel Lutheran**, Zap, and **St. Paul Lutheran**, Dodge.

Holy Cross Lutheran, Sarasota, Fla., recently voted to withdraw from the ELCA. Pastor David McCoy serves the congregation, with more than 1,000 in its listed membership.

The AFLC in Canada recently received **Trinity Lutheran**, Drummondsville, Quebec, into its membership.

The ordinations of three graduating seminarians have been scheduled. **Karl Anderson** will be ordained at 3 p.m. June 20 at the AFLC schools chapel, Plymouth, Minn. He has accepted a call to serve Our Savior's Lutheran, Argyle, Minn. **Jason Siemens** was ordained May 30 at Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill. **Brent Olson** will be ordained June 27 at Zion Lutheran, Tioga, N.D.

**AFLC Wilderness Bible Camp**, Lake Park, Minn., will host family camp July 13-18. The speakers will be Dr. Francis Monseth and Pastor Larry Haagenson. For more information, call Pastor Terry Olson at 218-681-4643.

**Correction:** The WMF did not furnish the new Francis W.

Monseth Library, as reported in the April issue. However, two gifts of money from the WMF were given specifically to the library.



## Colorado congregation accepts new members

New members were accepted at Lutheran Church of Hope, Loveland, Colo., including, from left, Marie Phillipp, Donna Munson, John and Nellie Lesser, Lola Guttormson, Marla Alvarez, David and Lily Cole, and Dennis and Patsy Barth. Pastor Larry Haagenson, at right, serves the congregation.

#### **WMF memorials: April**

Florence Bredeson, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Richard Hanson, Miltona, Minn.
Dorothy Eraas, Tioga, N.D.
James Lee, McVille, N.D.
Lonny Gulbraa, Wallace, S.D.
Milford Jameson, Wallace
Kenneth Nylander, Tioga
Elizabeth Rud, Edinburg, N.D.
Opal Gemmill, Edinburg
Lois Johnson, Edinburg
Ragnhild Windingland, Edinburg

## AFLC chaplain moderates national prayer meeting

AFLC Pastor Mark Benz, a chaplain at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., helps moderate a nationwide telephonic prayer meeting each week. The hour-long prayer conference call takes place at noon, Central time, every Wednesday and is open to all Christians across the United States. The prayer meeting focuses on reversing the nation's moral slide, dealing with subjects such as same-sex marriage and attacks on the Pledge of Allegiance. Chaplain Benz and Pastor Wiley Drake, who is based in California, have sent letters to all congressmen encouraging them to come on the line and give a greeting and prayer. The number for the weekly phone prayer meetings is 603-488-0702, access code 619110.

### AFLC memorials — April

#### **AFLBS**

Delores Amb, Evelyn Buck (2), Mary Ann Holmen, Vera Schottle, Iris Myron, Sema Hansen, Arnold Stone, Janice Harney

#### **Parish Education**

Pastor Chris Oswood, William Werner

#### **General Fund**

Verna Sanger, Arnold Stone (2)

#### **World Missions**

Verna Sanger, Alida Olson

#### **Home Missions**

Alida Olson, Mitsy Stubson, Vernon Danielson

#### Vision 2004

Art Skaug, Janice Harney, Irvin Lilleberg, Kenny Nylander, Linda Sarkela

... in honor of World Missions

Robert and Helen Miller

#### **Association of Free Lutheran Congregations**

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences (4 months) - January 1 - April 30, 2004

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN APRIL	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$288,771	\$27,643.72	\$102,773.08	36
Youth Ministries	54,024	7,828.41	26,236.53	49
Parish Education	82,062	9,387.50	30,789.15	38
Seminary	154,195	20,226.50	70,683.93	46
Bible School	264,089	28,978.43	73,233.04	28
Home Missions	287,115	19,213.24	79,211.40	28
Church Extension	24,576	3,532.53	4,910.52	20
World Missions	256,326	25,211.56	75,942.35	30
Personal Support	328,311	36,729.20	123,132.23	38
TOTALS	\$1,739,469	\$178,751.09	\$586,912.23	34
TOTALS 2003	\$1,740,325	\$148,636.35	\$527,139.95	30
Goal 33%	, , -,-	, , , ,	, , ,	

The Evangelism Department received \$11,547.36 in April. The office of director of Development received \$25 in April.

### [Editorial]

## Discussing our differences

n April 1521 Martin Luther was brought up on trial before the emperor and other authorities at an event called the Diet of Worms. His writings and teaching had been causing a stir throughout Europe. People were amazed at the boldness of this simple monk as he spoke out against



Craig Johnson

and other dangers.

the transgressions of the Catholic Church. The issue at Worms was whether Luther would recant from what he had written or continue to challenge the teaching of the church and face excommunication

The officials confronted Luther with a pile of books and asked if they were his. Luther answered, "The books are all mine, and I have written more." Then came the or do you care to reject a part?"

question, "Do you defend them all, Luther replied, "This touches God and his Word. This affects the salvation of souls. ... To say too little or too much would be dangerous. I beg you, give me time to think it over."

Luther's hesitation surprised his critics and supporters alike. As they waited till the next day for Luther's reply, they wondered if the man who had been so courageous was now uncertain and considering changing his position.

When the Diet reassembled Luther stated, "If I am shown my error, I will be the first to throw my books in the fire." He was then asked, "Martin — answer candidly

and without horns — do you or do you not repudiate your books and the errors which they contain?" To that Luther replied, "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason ... my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything. For to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."

At Worms Luther set a good example on how to act when disputes arise. He paused to consider his reply. Luther's critics were prepared for battle, and were taken off guard when Luther asked for time to think. The Bible says, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19, NIV). It also says in Proverbs 29:20, "Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Problems often arise when a person gets involved in a discussion and, in a desire to make their point, speaks without thinking.

Luther showed humility. He admitted he might have made errors. He was open to correction from the Word of God. The Bible says, "... whoever heeds correction gains understanding ... humility comes before honor" (Proverbs 15:32, 33). Humility is too often lacking when we get involved in a discussion of various ideas. We're certain we're right and we don't want to listen to anything different. Our goal becomes to win and to get the other person to think like we do.

In a little kids' soccer match, often the biggest challenge the coach has is to get his team to understand which is their goal. It is similar for us when we discuss

May our stand on issues be determined by the Scriptures.

issues. We need to be clear on what is the goal. It is not to win and get the others to see that we're right and they're wrong. The goal is to find the truth, grow in our understanding of it and honor the Lord.

Luther wanted to find the truth, and so he encouraged his critics to look to the Scriptures to see if he was in error. He described himself as "captive to the Word of God." Too often our positions are determined by our preferences, tradition, our own ideas or what will please the crowd. May our stand on issues be determined by the Scrip-

We must take care in how we use the Scriptures. We do not first decide what we think and then find verses to support our position. We go to the Bible first to determine our position.

We are to be courageous and confident, but also humble. It is important to boldly share truth, but to be sure we do so in a Christlike and Christ-honoring manner.

#### THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

### [Something to Share]

## I am amazed when I picture Paul sharing the gospel while chained to a prison guard.

# take a STAND

s I look around at what is happening in our local cities, states and nation, I see a war against biblical principles. This war is setting our nation at a crossroads where Christians are called to take a stand for what is right.

Removing the Ten Commandments from public places will have dire consequences in our nation if Christians do not take a stand. Sandy Rios of Concerned Women for America (www.cwfa.org) says, "Kids are killing kids — why? Did you ever stop to think it might be because they never were told 'Thou shalt not kill'?"

Since 1973's decision in Roe v. Wade legalizing abortion, more than 43 million babies have been killed. The Family Research Council Web site (www.frc.org) equates this to the population of 17 states.

On May 17, Massachusetts was scheduled to take action in issuing legal marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Here lies the heart of the issue. As Christians, we are in a spiritual battle, one that requires spiritual understanding. Ephesians 2:1-3 describes this battleground: "And

you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

Considering this battle, it is important for Christians to:

First, read God's Word. In preparing for spiritual battle we need armor and an understanding of who the enemy is. It may mean taking a few minutes during the day to read a couple of verses and pray, but it can make all the difference in our offense.

Second, share. Paul's example in Philippians 1, challenges Christians to be bolder in speaking and sharing the gospel and standing for biblical principles. I am amazed when I picture Paul sharing the gospel while chained to a prison guard. Paul wrote that his circumstances only helped to advance the gospel, since the whole Praetorian Guard knew

that Paul was serving Christ. Just like Paul, we need to grab hold of every opportunity to share the gospel.

Third, stand for what is right. Christians need to educate themselves on current issues and not be afraid to share biblical principles when an idea is contrary to Scripture. God calls us to stand for what is right, but we need to do it with an educated mind and a spirit of love. Let your representatives and senators know how you feel on issues and vote only for officials who stand for biblical values. Pray

In Acts 26:18, the Lord called Paul to this ministry, "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me."

With so much at stake, we must pray. The battle lines are evident. We need to take a stand. Let's do it together in Christ.

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