

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

MARCH 2005



Jesus

Savior

Friend



“These weeks of Lent are crucially set aside to cultivate our hearts to more fully comprehend Jesus’ victory over sin, death, and the devil.”

In exactly seven days I will be on a plane headed to Brazil for five weeks with our AFLC missionaries. These countdown days before leaving are full of final preparations, packing, and anticipation. A visa has been secured, my arm poked for immunizations, ministry tools gathered, and simple Portuguese phrases and songs practiced. Spiritually, there is a lot of preparation, too, praying for a surrendered heart and a vibrant work of God.

Maybe I should go about this whole thing an entirely different way. I could just order a ticket the day before I want to leave, hop on a plane to São Paulo without luggage, prayerful forethought or study, and for the pure sake of adventure, wing my way through the entire mission trip. Wouldn’t that be great? Surely I would still have opportunity to share Jesus and experience much; it would save a lot of work, too. Does it sound crazy? Why?

Because preparation is essential! All the planning I am now undertaking enables me to more fully minister, participate, and learn in these coming weeks. Preparation is not tedious because it has a purpose and an end reward.

Resurrection Sunday is a few weeks away; we will celebrate the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. Now, though, we are called to a season of anticipation and preparation. These weeks of Lent are crucially set aside to cultivate our hearts to more fully comprehend Jesus’ victory over sin, death, and the devil. That is why Lent calls us to godly sorrow over sin in our lives

(Joshua 3:5). We cannot fully embrace His Lordship until we flee our sin.

II Corinthians 7:10-11 makes a dramatic distinction between godly sorrow and remorse. Godly sorrow is characterized by genuine repentance, i.e., carefulness to flee from old sins, clearing of conscience with God and man, indignation against sin, fear of breaking God’s holy law, a fervent desire to please God, zeal to walk in truth, and a Christian response to the consequences of our sin. Godly sorrow that leads to repentance is rooted in humility.

Remorse, on the other hand, is rooted in pride. It is temporary. It is condemning. Remorse can’t get past self. It carries on, and on, and on about messing up. In the end it yields little comfort, lasting strength, or holy zeal to turn from our sin.

May none of us miss out on the fullness of God’s mercy by coming to Good Friday and Easter with a haphazard, carelessly prepared heart. Everyday let our prayer be, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23). We don’t need to fear experiencing godly sorrow, rush through it, or be embarrassed by it. The price of preparation is infinitely worthwhile. His grace is never sweeter, His love never dearer, than after seasons of repentance.

— By Christie Ballmann
Word of Truth Free Lutheran
Glen Rose, Texas

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We do not simply need an example; we need a Savior. An example can stir our imagination, kindle our idealism and strengthen our resolve, but it cannot cleanse the defilement of our past sins, bring peace to our troubled conscience or fetch us home to God.

— John R. W. Stott
Basic Christianity

And though of myself I have nothing to present to Him but sins and misery, yet I know He looks upon me not as I am of myself, but as I am in my Savior ... I am therefore full of inexpressible joy, and shall die in peace.

— John Donne

And I rejoice that no matter how dark the Friday or how cold the tomb, that with you as my risen Savior, there is always the warm hope of an Easter morning.

— Ken Gire
“Intimate Moments with the Savior”

Death is no longer the great darkness which never ends. For the Christian it is only a pause. We look forward to that which lies before us.

— H. E. Wisloff
“Quiet Moments on the Way Home”



by Larry Walker

They took Lent seriously in old times. In Norway people would mix ashes into their food on Ash Wednesday, and cover their heads with ashes. They would eat no meat for weeks (some farmers weighed their servants on Ash Wednesday and again on the Saturday before Easter, to make sure they didn't cheat), until Good Friday, when they'd genuinely starve themselves (and their livestock, too) and put stones in their shoes so it hurt to walk, in memory of Christ's *Via Dolorosa* — or "way of suffering" to Golgotha. Superstition? Sure.

But think what Easter must have meant to those people. Have you ever dehydrated yourself working in the sun and gone inside for a drink of water? Did any expensive drink ever taste better than that water? Think how the Easter feast must have tasted to people who'd been genuinely malnourished through Lent. There's no pleasure like a pleasure that eases real pain.

Doctors tell us "no pain, no gain" is bad advice for physical training. But in the spiritual realm it holds true. Sometimes I wonder if I've ever learned anything except through pain. I have an idea that part of Eve's curse in the Garden — "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to

children" (Genesis 3:16a, NIV) — has a more universal application. *Nothing* in the fallen world is ever born except by pain.

In John 16, Jesus is talking to His disciples, preparing them for the horrors of His passion to come. He says, "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will be turned to joy" (verse 20). He goes on to describe a woman giving birth — the pain is intense, nearly unbearable. But then someone places the child in the mother's arms, and all that woman can think of is her baby. "Pain? Oh yes, I guess there was some pain, now that I think about it ..."

"In a little while you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me," says Jesus (verse 17). For the Christian, Jesus is the sun in the sky. Without Him there can be no joy. And yet He tells these friends of His, "I'm leaving you for a little while. It'll be tough, but hang on. I'll be back."

How many people have lost their faith over the years and explained it like this: "I believed in God until my wife died, or until my child got sick. I can't believe in a God who'd permit a thing like that."

Think of the story of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.



little while

We're told (John 11:6) that when Jesus heard the news of Lazarus' illness, He *did nothing*. Mary and Martha had appealed to Jesus in faith, and He just sat there.

Can you imagine the sense of betrayal those sisters felt as they waited? Can you imagine the puzzlement of the disciples, wondering if Jesus could really be the kind, loving Lord they thought He was if He acted this way?

Who'd have imagined the audacious plan Jesus had in mind? His intention was to drag people He generally loved through the greatest disappointment and grief possible, in order to bring them through to the other side, into His sunlight again. He couldn't give His friends the glorious, liberating experience of a resurrection unless somebody died first. They were going to see a thing that would forever free them from the fear of death, the deepest fear in the human heart. *But to make that possible Jesus had to hurt them profoundly.*

And that was just a preview. The main event was still coming. The disciples expected Jesus to build a kingdom on earth. They were waiting for Him to give the word for the insurgency to begin. Instead, Jesus simply gave Himself up to His enemies and *did nothing* while the authorities accused, mocked, tortured and killed Him.

Again, the disappointment, the betrayal. The disciples at Emmaus said, "We had hoped that He was the

one who was going to redeem Israel ..." (Luke 24:21). Can you feel the sorrow and the anger in those words? "We believed in Him! He let us down!"

This point — what Dr. James Dobson calls "the betrayal barrier" — is the acid test for every Christian. It's not a question of *whether* we will feel betrayed by God someday. *We will*. Whether our suffering comes in the form of the death of a loved one, physical illness, career failure, rejection by others or any of a thousand possible trials, all the way up the scale to genuine martyrdom, each of us must pass that test. It's not a game. Not a simulation. It feels as if the sky is iron and the earth brass. It feels as if every reason to believe has been analyzed by scientific experts and debunked.

The good news is that there is help. Jesus says in John 16:7, "Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you ..." It's precisely in that dark, hopeless place of "betrayal" that the Holy Spirit is working — working so silently that we think He's not there. He holds us, if we let Him.

And then, one morning — it's Easter.

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

by Pastor Leslie Johnson

In Gethsemane, just a few hours prior to His death, Jesus experienced an intense agony of soul that is beyond our ability to fully understand. What took place in Gethsemane? What is the meaning of Jesus' ordeal in the garden for us today? What can we learn from this incident in Jesus' life for our faith?

As Jesus walked on this earth, His life overflowed with acts of love and mercy. It seems as though His every waking moment was spent in compassionate acts of love and service toward those around Him. Even in the last hours of His life He spent time serving His disciples and warning them of personal failure (John 13); lovingly giving to His followers the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26ff); instructing them about the importance of their relationship with Him (John 15); and teaching them about the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16).

In Gethsemane, however, Jesus — for about an hour — turned His focus toward His own humanness in the face of His impending suffering for sinful mankind. He spoke to His followers, perhaps for the first time, of a *tremendous need for them to help Him* by means of prayer as He underwent this unusual spiritual battle in the fullness of His humanity. This suffering was intense, as these words by the Gospel writers portray: grieved, alarmed, very troubled, deeply distressed. Luke tells us His sweat became great drops of blood, which flowed so profusely that it fell to the ground (Luke 22:44).

As Jesus prayed, there likely was an olive press nearby (in fact, "Gethsemane" means "olive press"), and He literally sensed His soul being crushed just as the olives were crushed to produce the precious oil so important to the economy of that day.

Just what was the suffering Jesus experienced? He described it in His prayer as a "cup." This cup in part refers to the "cup of God's wrath" poured out upon sin (cf. Isaiah 51:17, 22). Jesus was very much aware that for the *first time in all eternity*, He was about to experience a dreadful rending and separation from His Father as He assumed the sin of the world upon Himself as our substitute (II Corinthians 5:21). Jesus' sinless soul now sensed, more than it ever had before, the nearness of mankind's filth and corruption.

How can we even begin to imagine the suffering to His sinless soul when His spotless purity became corrupted with every last disgusting act of the fallen cre-

ation? "He who came only to save became the embodiment of every murder from Cain on; He, the very personification of truth, became the embodiment of every lie that has ever been told and will ever be told; He whose moral conduct was absolutely pure, became the embodiment of every fornication, adultery, and homosexual act," said Bible teacher and author Monty Mills.

This agony of soul led Jesus to pray, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). Just what was Jesus asking in these words?

The writer of Hebrews interprets Jesus' prayer for us: "In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety" (Hebrews 5:7).

The word "heard" in this passage implies that Jesus received an affirmative answer. In other words, the Father did deliver Him from His "cup." The words "from death" can also be translated "out of death." It appears that Jesus, realizing that the penalty for sin was eternal death, was pondering the reality of an eternal separation from His Father and thus prayed that His separation would not be eternal. When He prayed, "Let this cup pass from Me," and "Not as I will, but as You will," He was in effect praying, "I cannot endure even the consideration of eternal separation from You, Father — it is so grievous that just the thought of it is killing Me. Please don't let the separation be forever! But, I am willing to do whatever it takes to save the world from eternal death!"

At Gethsemane the anguish Jesus experienced was not physical suffering, but suffering of the soul, a suffering that Jesus described as brutal enough to kill His soul. The soul sufferings of a holy, sinless Creator in human flesh are beyond the ability of anyone to imagine. We cannot comprehend what He endured so that we may enjoy eternal life. How humbled and grateful every child of God must be at the assured hope of standing justified in the presence of so gracious a God. May this be our attitude during Holy Week.

Johnson is pastor of Christ the King Lutheran, Wilson, Wis.



go to
dark

geth-
semane



music



of

Easter



by Clara Gunderson

*“What wondrous love is this,
O my soul, o my soul!
What wondrous love is this. O my soul!
What wondrous love is this
That caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse
For my soul, for my soul,
To bear the dreadful curse
For my soul?”*

Dwelling on this theme, various scenes come to mind ... sitting as a teenager in my church on a Wednesday night; attending Lenten services in other churches over the years. At times I was there because I wanted to be. Other times, well, it was just the thing to do — it was part of the life of the church. Still other times, I admit, I was there because I thought it was expected of me. When I was young, the reading of the passion story, usually in a subdued, reverent voice, fell on half-listening ears, my mind wandering, my eyes heavy.

On the other hand, the hymns ministered deep in my soul. They helped me see Jesus in His agony. I saw His obedience to His Father and the price He paid when His Father forsook Him. I saw Him as the sacrifice, the substitute for me. My heart responded as we sang together:

*“Go to dark Gethsemane
Ye that feel the tempter’s power;
Your Redeemer’s conflict see;
Watch with Him one bitter hour;
Turn not from His grief away;
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.”*

I felt ashamed of my droopy eyelids, my half-attention as I remembered an earlier vow to not be like the disciples who fell asleep while Jesus prayed in His deepest

time of need, and I cried out silently for His forgiveness. Prayerfully we sang “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded,” confessing together the second stanza:

*“What Thou, O Lord, has suffered
Was all for sinners’ gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
’Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
Vouch-safe to me Thy grace.”*

Last year on Ash Wednesday the film, “The Passion of the Christ” was released. Some folks didn’t want to see it, but I was drawn to go. Yes, it was brutal; no, I couldn’t watch all the vivid beatings of the Christ. And, yes, it reached deep into my heart and soul, causing me to claim, rightfully, my own guilt that though I live 2,000 years after His death, it was my sin He paid in full with the shedding of His blood, even to death.

Like these beautiful hymns, scenes of the movie have stayed with me, reminding me of the message of the cross — and I answer, “Yes” to the question:

*“Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble,
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?”*

Still in a spirit of mourning, we raise our voices in a glorious hymn of praise, “Hallelujah, What a Savior.”

*“Man of Sorrows!’ What a name
for the Son of God who came*

See Music, page 15

by Barbara Moland

What goes through the minds of young children when they hear and see the cross? How can we best share the message of the cross with the little eyes and ears of children?

Sing this simple tune with little children to the tune of "Are You Sleeping."

*"Here's the cross,
Here's the cross;
Jesus died,
Jesus died;
Here's the tomb,
Empty tomb;
Jesus lives;
Jesus lives."*

Share actions of making a cross with two fingers or two arms. Then cup two hands together for the tomb. Open them for the empty tomb and wave arms in the air or clap for "Jesus lives."

Gentleness in Delivery

Oh the peace, love, and safety that flows through the singing voice, through music. God has given us an amazing gift in the universal language of music. Shall we begin our delivery of the message of the cross with a singing voice? It exhibits the love of the cross. This and other very simple tunes tenderly bring the death and life story of Jesus to young children.

Some children hear of the death of Jesus on the cross from the day of their birth. Others may hear this seemingly strange concept for the first time in your Sunday school class or in a public setting. In any case, bringing the message of Christ's victory immediately following His death sacrifice helps young children feel and know right away the love that it means. Little children can avoid distasteful, alarming fears that could come with the mental picture of Jesus beaten, bleeding and moaning. Jesus on the cross comes *with* the happiness of

His coming alive.

The following wonderful hymn moves on to personalize the concept of the cross while Christ's death message is immediately followed by the victory, life and joy.

*"Do you know who died for me?
Jesus did; Jesus did.
Lovingly He died for me;
Yes, He really did.
Do you know who lives for me?
Jesus does; Jesus does.
Lovingly He lives for me;
Yes, He really does.
Do you know who cares for me?
Jesus does; Jesus does.
Lovingly He cares for me;
Yes, He really does."*

("Little Children Sing to God," Concordia)

With the warmth of song we can move on to tender, beautiful quality art portraying Christ's death. And the story comes forth verbally on the parent's/teacher's loving, gentle voice and face.

Acknowledging Feelings

"Yes, it was very, very painful for Jesus. Mean people hurt Him a lot. Jesus was bleeding. Have you had an owie? They gave Jesus many of those. Yet Jesus was willing to be hurt and die because God had a special plan. It is something very important. He was dying so you and I can be forgiven.

"When you tell a lie or take something that isn't yours you are doing wrong. Jesus wants you to be sorry and not do it again. He wants to forgive you. He wants to still say, 'I love you. I love you, Sarah. I love you, Valencia.' When you come to Jesus He can forgive you because He died on the cross. So you see the cross is very special and shows us Jesus' great love for you and me.

See Children, page 15

here

is

the

cross



betrayed!



do
you

love
Jesus?



By Pastor Karl Anderson

Betrayed! That's the way I feel when someone breaks my trust. Perhaps the mechanic didn't have the car ready when promised. Maybe a close friend passed on confidential information. Whether the offense was major or minor, the natural human response is to distance ourselves from the offender. Even when they display genuine repentance, it's difficult to trust them again.

After His resurrection, I'd like to think that Jesus was tempted to feel the same way about Peter. At least my old nature wants to think that way. But Jesus demonstrated an entirely different attitude. He sought to restore Peter.

Peter had denied knowing Christ three times while Jesus stood under arrest at the house of the High Priest. Jesus had warned him of Satan's plans to tempt him — to "sift him like wheat," Jesus said. Peter responded with his usual impetuous bravado; but after the rooster crowed, he wept bitterly. When the women returned from the grave reporting the empty tomb, Peter rushed to the site, only to find the linen cloths, but no Jesus. So, he went back to his fishing.

That's when Jesus appeared on the beach, just as he had three years earlier. The miracle He performed to identify Himself was almost the same as back then, too — a huge catch of fish. However, Peter was no longer interested in fish. He wanted Jesus. John may have been the first to recognize their Lord, but Peter was the one who jumped out of the boat to go to Him, just as he had when Jesus came walking on the water.

As usual, Jesus zeroed in on the core issue. He didn't accuse Peter or remind him of his sin. He didn't ask Peter to repent. Peter was already demonstrating repentance with his bitter tears and earnest desire. Jesus simply asked, "Do you love me more than these?" Two more times He asked, "Do you love me?" Three times, the same number that Peter had denied Jesus. It's interesting to note that the repetition did not irritate Peter. Instead, it grieved him. This offers further proof of the genuineness of Peter's repentance.

John the Baptist had to warn the Pharisees who came to be baptized: "Bear fruit in keeping with repen-

tance." Jesus looked for the fruit. Peter bore fruit. His tears, his earnest pursuit of Jesus, and now his grief bore witness to a changed heart. They backed up his words when he repeated three times, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." John later wrote, "We love because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). Peter's love for Jesus was evidence of God's work in his heart.

Sometimes the mindset sneaks up on us that salvation is just about avoiding the terrors of Hades, like a fire insurance policy. Other times we may focus on overcoming those sins that so easily entangle us. Christianity may then appear to those who don't know better as merely a reform movement teaching us how to gain victory over coveting or lying. These are important aspects of salvation. Sin destroys relationships. It tears people apart. It separates us from our God. We want relief from the penalties of our sin. We want to stop doing those things that hurt us and others. But God wants more for us. He saves us from the penalty and the practice of sin so that he can restore His relationship with us. He wants us to love Him.

Paul describes salvation as reconciliation. The word reconcile paints a picture of peace, harmony and friendship rising out of the ashes of conflict and enmity. Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:18 that in Jesus Christ, God has reconciled us to Himself. He has freed us to love Him. But He does more than that. The same verse tells us that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Only those who have been reconciled themselves will want to call someone else to reconciliation. Others can only share traditions, practices, and rituals. Only law. No gospel. That could be why it was only after Peter confessed his love for Jesus that he received His commission, "Feed my sheep."

Jesus asks you the same question today. Do you love me? He reminds us that the measure of our faith is not our office in the church, nor a good family, nor how much we've done or sacrificed. But do we love Jesus?

Anderson is pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran, Argyle, Minn.



Why * Lent?

Pastor Tom Olson, Cloquet, Minn., interviews his wife, Sharon, about Lenten services. Sharon served as a missionary in Liberia, West Africa for 11 years before she married Tom. Together they have served churches in Wisconsin, Alaska and Minnesota. They have recently accepted a call from AFLC Home Missions to serve Faith Lutheran in Mineral Point, Wis., beginning shortly after Easter.

Q

What was your church background before we were married?

A

My dad has German Lutheran roots, but for most of my childhood we attended a Christian and Missionary Alliance Church.

Q

What did your church do during the Lenten season?

A

As far as I remember, we had our regular midweek Bible studies, but we did have a community Good Friday service.

Q

What was your first reaction to the idea of attending Lenten services?

A

I thought a change from the regular Bible study might be something special I could look forward to during that time of the year.

Q

What are some of the things you liked in the services?

A

Having communion together on Ash Wednesday made Jesus seem very personal. To remember His suffering makes me be thankful for all He went through so that I could be His child.

Q

What about the music of the Lenten season?

A

In the Alliance church we sang a lot of songs about the cross and Jesus' blood, and the Lenten songs have the same emphasis. I think that's important to regularly get back to that message.

Q

How do your children like the Lenten season?

A

We have a district pulpit exchange. Our children look forward to hearing the other pastors and our son, Josiah, enjoys going out with his dad to the other churches in the district. Surprisingly, Josiah loves the very serious Lenten hymns that some churches use.

Q

Anything else special about Lenten services?

A

At our church in Cloquet, we have a light supper before several of the services. It's good for the youths and other groups to serve these meals and work together. We all enjoy the fellowship.

Every year the district pastors do a different series of messages. Each one adds thoughts and Scripture that makes the gospel story new and fresh.

Q

What advice would you give someone who has never attended Lenten services before?

A

I would say, if you make the commitment to go, you will be reminded of and appreciate more each year what Jesus has done for you on the cross.

Music, from page 9

*Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah, what a Savior!
Guilty, vile and helpless we,
Spotless Lamb of God was He.
Full atonement! Can it be?
Hallelujah, what a Savior!"*

Indeed, what a Savior I have, taking away the guilt of my sin, causing me to fall on my knees before Him, yet letting me look Him in the eyes and say, "I love you!"

Years ago I found myself humming a melody over and over. It haunted me; I couldn't put any words to it. Then, while rocking my babe, the words came. It was the hymn "Jesus Paid it All."

*"I can hear my Savior say,
Thy strength indeed is small!
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in me Thine all in all.
Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain —
He washed it white as snow."*

Oh, yes! Hallelujah! What a Savior! Only because He died, of course, can we go on to celebrate His resurrection. Author John Piper in his book, "The Passion of Jesus Christ," writes, "The death of Christ did not merely precede His resurrection — it was the price that obtained it"

Recently in church our worship leader, strumming his guitar softly, led us in singing "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," inserting a contemporary worship song as the chorus:

*"When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss,*

*and pour contempt on all my pride.
Oh the wonderful cross,
Oh the wonderful cross
Bids me come and die
and find that I may truly live
Oh the wonderful cross,
Oh the wonderful cross
All who gather here
by grace draw near
and bless your name."*

I quickly jotted down the lines to that chorus, thinking especially of the words, "wondrous cross." What a paradox! No, no, I said to myself — the cross is not wonderful.

Yet it is, isn't it?

*"Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God'
All the vain things
that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood."*

Oh, the anticipation, the bitter-sweet emotion there must have been in heaven during the time we call "Saturday," the day before His resurrection. Years ago I heard evangelist Tony Campolo declare: "It's Friday, but Sunday is coming!" Sunday — the day we celebrate the resurrection. Easter Sunday, a joyous time to sing together:

*"I know that my Redeemer lives!
What comfort this sweet sentence
gives! He lives, He lives,
who once was dead,
He lives my ever-living Head.
He lives, all glory to His name!
He lives, my Jesus still the same;
O the sweet joy this sentence gives:
I know that my Redeemer lives!"*

Easter Sunday, a day when more people attend church services than any other Sunday in the year. The message of death and resurrection will be boldly announced by word and by song. I'll be there sitting in the pew, lifting my voice with yours, singing,

*"Christ the Lord is risen today. Alle-
luia! Sons of men and angels say,
Raise your joys and triumphs high,
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply,*

*Love's redeeming work is done. Alle-
luia. Fought the fight
the battle won*

*Death in vain forbids Him rise
Christ hath opened paradise*

*Sing we to our God above
Praise eternal as His love
Praise Him, all ye heavenly hosts
Father, Son and Holy Ghost."*

Gunderson is a member of Sunnyside Free Lutheran, Stacy, Minn.

Resources from Parish Education:

"Passion Hymns for a Kid's Heart" — book with CD, \$16

"What Wondrous Love Is This" — book with CD, \$16

"Hallelujah, What a Savior!" — book, \$8 (cassette or CD also available)

Contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or parished@aflc.org.

Children, from page 10

"Jesus didn't stay on the cross. After He was put in the tomb all dead God made Him come alive again! It is so amazing! It is so happy. I love the cross. I love Jesus."

Integrating the Symbol

The message of the love and forgiveness of Jesus in the cross can surround children. While we honor it and hold it in highest esteem, we can bring it all around us.

Hands-on projects, including crosses, creating styles of crosses and colors of crosses, learning the history of crosses and hanging crosses remind children of its message. *Here's the cross!*

Moland is a member of Our Redeemer Lutheran, Kirkland, Wash., where her husband serves as pastor.

Looking back

Looking back on our lives is a good exercise every so often. It reminds us of how God has led and provided for us every step of the way, even when we have not recognized it or been seeking it.

Four years ago, when I was considering coming to work for the AFLC Missions, I recalled that I never thought I would be called to any type of mission work (never say never). In thinking about this, it brought to mind a time in my home church when a guest pastor was speaking on Isaiah 6:8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I, Send me!'"

The speaker put great emphasis on "Who will go," repeating the phrase and getting louder with each repetition. Finally, a small boy, I'm sure wondering why no one would answer, popped out of his seat and yelled back to the speaker, "I'll go! I'll go!" Of course the parents were a little embarrassed, but what a lesson for each of us.

With childlike faith and unquestioning obedience, we too need to heed God's call to us. I realized that God was calling me to take a step of faith, and to trust the Lord to take care of all my concerns.

Our Lord is daily calling each of us to serve Him. This call may not be to a foreign

mission field, but He does call each one of us to be witnesses for Him in whatever we do and to serve Him with all our hearts. He has a special place for each of us in His kingdom. I have come to realize that no matter if it is far away or right where you live, it is no less important for each of us to know that His purpose for us does not change. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Colossians 3:17).

We can be assured that our Lord will always be faithful to us. Christ and the promises in His Word will never change; we are the ones who change. His provision and care for His servants are unceasing. "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (I Thessalonians 5:24).

As I look back, I can see how God has not only provided for me each step of the way, but extended His great mercy and unchanging love to me every day. It humbles me greatly to recognize this, knowing that I fail so often. We should all be humbled this Lenten season as we remember God's greatest provision for us, His Son. Jesus went willingly to the cross, knowing that the road ahead would be very difficult. He did not waiver and made the greatest sacrifice, that each of us could have eternal life.

I have also been encouraged to see how God has provided for the work of His kingdom in our little corner of the world in AFLC Missions. Through His servants, who have faithfully given and prayed, the Kingdom work is continuing, as World Missions looks ahead to expanding existing work and stepping out in faith to new areas.

We all can look back and see how God has provided in the past and be assured that He will provide in the future. Our God asks that we be obedient and answer the call that He has for each of us. May He find us faithful!

— By Wanda Jacobson
Solid Rock Free Lutheran
Anoka, Minn.



Cemetery the church

It is a privilege to have been the pastor of country congregations with a cemetery by the church.

I probably didn't give it much thought at the time, however, other than to think that it may have been a bit quaint. My home church, like those of many of our readers, was situated in town, and the cemeteries were usually located near the city limits. Graveyards, we called them, and the only time I visited any was for burials after funerals, as we weren't a family that put flowers on the graves of departed relatives.



Robert Lee

Last summer my wife, Gloria, and I returned to a community where we served more than 30 years ago, and on a Saturday evening drove out to one of the country churches that had been a part of the parish. We quietly walked among the gravestones in the little cemetery, reading the names on the markers in the light of the setting sun and tearfully realized that most of the people whom we remembered best were now laid to rest here.

As we drove away from the church that evening, my mind was gripped as never before with a powerful awareness that I as a pastor have been a dying man preaching to dying people, to those whose mortal remains will be buried in a cemetery some day and whose souls will be spending eternity with the Lord or apart from Him.

Have I proclaimed the message of salvation from God's Word clear and plain? Did I point people to Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, whom to know is life eternal? Was I faithful to pray for my parishioners, that they might be ready to meet the Lord?

The cemetery by the church is a constant reminder to everyone who attends from Sunday to Sunday that, from the words of the prophet Isaiah, "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. ... Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (40:6-8). There lie the bodies of those who have gone before us — family, neighbors and friends — and here my body shall be laid someday, too. Although the cemetery may be a place of tears and sadness when we say farewell to departed loved ones, it may also be a joyous place when we remember that, for Christians, to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:8).

The gravestones in the cemetery carry a silent message for those who will receive it. Worshipers, prepare to meet your God! Pastors, the people to whom you preach possess undying souls that will be won for Christ or lost for eternity!

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me shall live even if he dies, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

May we answer with Martha, "Yes, Lord, I believe" (John 11:25-27).

studentmissions

By Karisa Finstrom



“Now to Him who is able to do far more than we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Isn't it funny how when we think or talk about missions it's usually about the impact that *we* are going to have on people? It is all about what we can offer them, what knowledge we can impart to them, and how we can change people's lives for the better. A mission is about glorifying God through our bodies and the gifts and talents that He has given according to His will.

But I want us to turn the tables. Let's look at how it affects us.

Last summer, I led four student mission trips to the Mexican cities of Jerez and San Rafael, and the inner cities of Minneapolis and Springfield, Mo. The impact that we had on each place was very evident on the outside. In Jerez, we were able to lead vacation Bible school in Las Quintas, where the Lord brought people who needed to hear the message of

Jesus. In San Rafael, we led a prayer walk in the city and handed out tons of tracts to people. In Minneapolis we prayed with two little girls to receive Christ for the first time. In Springfield, we performed a puppet show at a homeless shelter and shared the gift of Jesus Christ.

Students came back from the mission trips as changed people. The effects sometimes are very obvious to begin with and other times are only found under the surface after time passes.

“Lately, I realized how much I need to rely on God so that I can set an example and give Him the glory for everything,” said Dana, a student on the San Rafael mission trip.

The Lord truly works in us as we work for Him. On the mission trips, students were taken out of their comfort zones. Their dependence on our Lord God became stronger. They learned that the work wasn't about them, but Him. That it's all about what He wants to happen, not only through us, but also in us. This became real life this summer with the different youth groups I worked with.

“[The trip] brought God to more of a personal level ... [I saw that] God has a passion for other people. We came wanting to work in others' lives, but He wanted to work in our lives,” said Elise, who worked in the inner city of Minneapolis.

There are many more stories from these trips. They are evidence of the way the Lord shines through us to reach people's lives with the love and gospel of Jesus. It's not about our glory. It's about giving all the glory to the Lord, as all of the students learned this summer.

Finstrom is a 2004 graduate of the Ministry Training Institute, where she spent her internship organizing student mission trips.

Myhre becomes WMF's women's outreach coordinator



Faylin Myhre

Psalms 37:23 says, "The steps of a man are established by the Lord; and He delights in his way." One version says, "He delights in the details of our lives." Isn't that exciting? You may not find the details of my life exciting, but I hope you find some of them interesting or at least informative.

I grew up on a farm in northern Minnesota. After high school I attended AFLBS, where I met Steve Myhre. We were married in 1981 and settled in Abercrombie, N.D., where we have lived since. God has blessed us with three sons: Zachary is 21, Ethan is 17, and Isaac is 12.

We have always been active in our church, serving in different capacities over the years as the Lord led and needs arose. These opportunities were everyday things that we are all asked to do: serve lunch, teach Sunday school, sing, lead Bible studies, and help with VBS. God uses these little things to stretch and prepare us.

Now God has called me into a new direction of service. I will have the privilege of visiting with many of the newer AFLC churches, sharing with them the work of the WMF. I hope to encourage women to have a closer walk with Jesus, closer relationships within the local WMF and to reach out to the world with the love and message of Jesus Christ.

I pray the Lord establishes my steps and that He continues to be delighted in the details of my life. Will you join me?

Johnson hired as executive secretary to national WMF



Dawn Johnson

Greetings to all! I was asked to introduce myself to you as the new executive secretary of the national WMF. My name is Dawn Johnson and I am from Wilson, Wis.

I have been married to Pastor Les Johnson for 21 years. We were both born and raised in Minnesota. We have served congregations in Canada, North Dakota and now Wisconsin. We are blessed with four children: Matthew, Mark, Rachel and Michael. In June we will welcome another daughter into our family when Matthew marries.

I have been active in the WMF at all levels: local, district and national (Canada and now the US). I have found that the best way to get to know about things better is to get involved.

I look forward to serving our Lord in this capacity, and I am here to serve you in any way that I can. I covet your prayers and ask that you please be patient with me as I get acquainted with this new position.

"The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail, they are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

Myhre will travel to women's organizations whose congregations are fairly new to the AFLC. To extend an invitation, contact Johnson, who is in charge of Myhre's itinerary, at (715) 772-4454 or ldjohnson@wwt.net.

Annual Conference housing contacts

The 42nd AFLC Annual Conference will be held June 14-17 on the campus of Valley City State University in Valley City, N.D. The April and May issues of the *Lutheran Ambassador* will contain registration and schedule information.

Motels

Ask for AFLC Annual Conference rooms at:

Americinn: 280 Winter Show Road; indoor hot tub and pool, continental breakfast. (701) 845-5551 or 1-800-634-3444.

Wagon Wheel Inn: 455 Winter Show Road; indoor pool, continental breakfast. (701) 845-5333 or 1-800-319-5333. RV hookups available.

Super Eight Motel: 822 11th St. SW; continental breakfast. (701) 845-1140.

Or contact:

Another Time Guest Cottage: 116 5th Ave. SW (701) 845-3171.

Victorian Charm Guest Inn: 535 Central Ave. N (701) 845-0887. Private baths with some rooms.

Carousal Lodge Exit 292 near Valley Bed and Breakfast. (701) 845-0887.

Valley Bed and Breakfast: 3611 117th Ave. SE- Exit 292. (701) 845-5893.

Sheyenne Riverbend Farm Guest Inn: 3716 117th Ave. SE, Box 456. (701) 845-1377 or (701) 845-2547. Email: RiverbendFarmND@aol.com. Web site: www.riverbendfarm.com.

VCSU Campus Dorms: Call Jason Wolski at (701) 845-7728 or Diane Hill at (701) 845-7224.

Camping/RV stations

East Ashtabula Crossing: 37 sites, playground, swim area, picnic area, showers, flush toilets, boat ramp and alcohol free. Call 1-800-444-6777.

West Ashtabula Crossing: 40 sites, electric hook-ups, boat ramp, and picnic area. No reservations. (701) 845-2970.

Bayshore Resort: Cabins, camping, and RV sites. (701) 845-1066.

Municipal Tourist Park: On business loop I-94. No reservations required. All hook-ups. Showers and water available. (701) 845-3294.



DATES July 4-9

SITE Estes Park, Colo.

THEME Rescue

VERSE Col. 1:13-14

Every two years, AFLC youths gather for a week of teaching, worship and fun at the YMCA of the Rockies. For registration information, visit www.aflc.org/youth

Longtime Lutheran Ambassador employee retires

Some jobs only get noticed when they don't get done. Taking care of the subscriptions for a magazine is a job like that.

For the last 22 years Bea Anderson maybe hasn't got noticed a whole lot for the job she has done, because she has done her job well. At first she served as secretary to the AFLC president and maintained the *Lutheran Ambassador* subscription list as part of that job. Later she retired as secretary to the president but continued to serve the *Ambassador*.

Bea has efficiently processed subscriptions, mailed out renewal notices, maintained the mailing list and helped in getting each issue of the magazine out to our subscribers. A job like hers

requires reliability. We have greatly appreciated how dependable and faithful Bea has been. I have been thankful as editor that I have always been able to count on Bea doing her job and doing it well.

Bea is retiring now from her position with the *Ambassador*. Charlotte Oswood, secretary to the president, will assume the responsibilities. We invite our readers to join with us in giving thanks for Bea's faithful service and praying with thanksgiving for Charlotte as she assumes additional responsibilities.

— Pastor Craig Johnson,
editor





Pastor Robert Lee, AFLC president, installed Pastor Alan Arneson on Jan. 23 at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn.

People and Places

Enoch Thorsgard, Northwood, N.D., was recently selected by North Dakota State University to receive the Agriculturalist of the Year award. He and his wife, Madeline, are active members of Ebenezer Lutheran, Northwood, and he was a main force behind the formation of the North Dakota Christian Coalition.

Pastor Oskar A. Salge, 91, of Red Oak, Texas, died Dec. 28, 2004. Born Oct. 25, 1913, in south Texas, he was ordained in 1948 by the former American Lutheran Church after several years as a lay pastor and missionary. He served Hispanic or bilingual parishes at Elsa, San Antonio, Edinburg, and San Juan, Texas, until 1979. Salge applied to the clergy roster of the AFLC in 1993 because of his biblical and doctrinal convictions, and, together with his late wife, Edith, he was part of an unsuccessful attempt to plant a new congregation in the San Antonio area.

Pastor Tom Olson has accepted a call from AFLC Home Missions to serve at Faith Lutheran, Mineral Point, Wis. He will be their first full-time pastor. Olson presently serves St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran in Cloquet, Minn., and Tamarack Free Lutheran in Tamarack, Minn. The Olsons plan on taking up the new work in Mineral Point shortly after Easter.

Pastor Fred Carlson, 81, of Minneapolis, died Jan. 7. Born June 23, 1923, he was the son of Herman and Amanda (Peterson) Carlson. He attended the Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis, Northwestern College, and Augsburg College. He graduated from AFLTS in 1971. He served Bethany Lutheran in Sebeka, Minn., and Zion Lutheran in Wadena, Minn.

Pastor David Skordahl has accepted an interim call to St. Paul Lutheran, Gifford, Ill. Formerly an ELCA congregation, St. Paul Lutheran recently affiliated with the AFLC.

The Coordinating Committee recently received resolutions of affiliation from four congregations: **Egeland Lutheran**, Waubay, S.D., which is served by Pastor Michael Peterson; **St. Timothy Lutheran**, Redding, Calif., which is served by lay leaders Donald Duff and Mel Trotter; **St. Peter Lutheran**, Melvin, Ill., which is served by interim Pastor Jan Horne; and **Peace Lutheran**, Crescent City, Fla., which is served by Pastor Bill Olson. Look for more information about these congregations in coming issues.

New Bible study available from Parish Education

Galatians: Justified by Faith

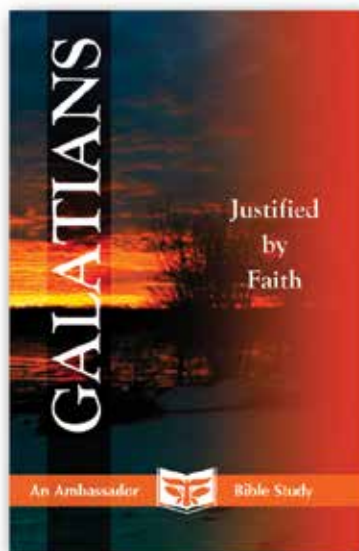
"Would you like chocolate or strawberry?"

"Both," we may answer when given such a choice. Many choices in life provide for such an option, but some do not. We cannot have the light on and off. It is one way or the other. The engine is either running or it is not. The two possibilities are mutually exclusive.

What about when it comes to salvation? Is it by a gift (grace) or by my efforts (works)? Many might say, "I'll play it safe and have both."

"No," says the Apostle Paul in this letter to the churches at Galatia. "Both" is not an option. Grace and works are mutually exclusive! Cursed is the one who teaches otherwise!" Paul testifies, "We have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of law."

"Galatians: Justified by Faith," a new Bible study from AFLC Parish Education, is now available for \$5 each plus shipping. Contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or parished@aflc.org for more information and to order your copy.



Trustees approve construction of second sem housing unit

The AFLC Schools Board of Trustees decided to proceed with construction of a second four-apartment building on the campus for seminary families at its last meeting in January. It is anticipated that the new building will be ready in time for occupancy before the beginning of the fall semester in September of this year. The Board is grateful for a recent gift to the seminary that helps to make it possible to build this much-needed housing facility at this time.

Study groups needed

Parish Education is looking for AFLC congregations who would be willing to field test one of three Bible studies in a group setting in the spring or summer of 2005, prior to their publication. The three studies are on Exodus 1-18; Worship — The Secret of the Lord, Part 1 (Confession of Sin); and Worship — The Secret of the Lord, Part 2 (Confession of Faith). If interested, contact Parish Ed at (763) 545-5631 or parished@aflc.org.

[ABCDEFGG]

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

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

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

AFLC memorials — January

AFLBS

Burgess Bach, Ruth Larson, Edith Hansen, Jennie Solberg, Steve Jacobson, Jack Shaw, Helen Fleischauer, Ione Oien

AFLT

Burgess Bach, Pastor Fred Carlson (2), Jennie Solberg

General Fund

Pastor Oskar Salge

Home Missions

Jan Fatland, Pam and Jerry

Ortman, Marie Klubberud, Jennie Solberg, Don Kinneberg

Miriam Infant Home

Lonnie Nyflot, Kitty Kelso

Vision 2004

Judy Reinki

World Missions

W. Jerald Hansen, Vincent Pankratz, Lydia Flickinger, Wayne Helland, Jennie Solberg

A thank you from Parish Ed

With joy and thankfulness to our Lord, we wish to thank those who responded to the financial needs of the AFLC Parish Education Department in the past few months. Because of this outpouring from your hearts, we were able to reprint Grade 4 and Grade 8 Quarter 1 student books. We have also made plans to print new catalogs this spring, which has not been done since 2002.

Though there is still more to be done, we trust the Lord to pro-

vide through you, His people, and we will print and reprint other needed Sunday school, confirmation, and study materials as the funds are available. Thank you for standing alongside Parish Education as we endeavor to fulfill our commission from our AFLC congregations to produce Bible-based teaching materials.

— AFLC Board
of Parish Education

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations 3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (1 month) – January 1 - 31, 2005

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund*	\$387,377	\$34,881	\$34,881	9
Youth Ministries . . .	56,062	3,530	3,530	6
Parish Education . . .	81,988	9,450	9,450	12
Seminary	156,804	16,090	16,090	10
Bible School	269,308	19,775	19,775	7
Home Missions.	277,870	20,846	20,846	8
World Missions.	262,377	22,216	22,216	8
Personal Support . . .	368,688	38,288	38,288	10
TOTALS	\$1,860,474	\$144,230	\$144,230	8
TOTALS 2004	\$1,739,460	\$141,482	\$141,482	8

Goal 8%

The Evangelism Department received \$6,166 in January.

* Includes Evangelism totals

Please contact individual departments for more information on projects.

the difference it makes

[Editorial]

Recently I was standing at the bedside of a good friend and longtime, faithful member of our congregation. After 89 years Howard B. Johnson's occupancy of the temporary tent of his body was coming to an end. I read to him Jesus' promise: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God;



Craig Johnson

trust also in me. ... I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1, 3, NIV). We prayed and then Howard took his last breath. It seemed as if he was waiting for closing prayer

before he went home.

It is at times like this when we are reminded again of the difference the cross and the resurrection of Jesus makes. We remember what really matters.

"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ... If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. ... If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (I Corinthians 15:14, 17, 19, 32).

If Christ has not been raised, I would be unable to come up with anything meaningful to say at a dying person's bedside. I would have no real hope to offer someone as life comes to an end. If Christ has not been raised, any words of comfort I would try to offer a grieving family would be nothing more

than empty platitudes.

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:20-22).

Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. Therefore, for the one with faith in Christ, the end of breathing is not the end of living. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies'" (John 11:25).

Another friend and faithful member of our congregation recently died as well. I write this after having done one funeral and preparing for another. These are times, in the midst of sorrow and grief, when we cling all the more to the promises of God's Word.

I've always looked at funerals as great opportunities for sharing the message of Christ. Death is a stark reminder of the seriousness of sin. It shouts out to us the price that must be paid for what we have done. It should cause us to ponder: what must I do? How can I be ready when it is my turn?

Apart from Jesus' death and resurrection, I would have no answer to that question. I wouldn't know what to say at funerals.

But Jesus died on the cross for our sins and satisfied the demands of the law so that we can be forgiven. We can be made clean. Through faith in Him we can have confidence as we prepare to stand before the holy God. Jesus rose again and is alive now and forever-

It is at times like this when we are reminded again of the difference the cross and the resurrection of Jesus makes. We remember what really matters.

more. We have good news to share with the grieving, hope for the heartbroken, comfort for the fearful, if they will repent of sin and trust in Jesus.

Some years ago I was preparing to conduct a funeral. The Lord had worked through our congregation to help this friend come to a saving knowledge of Jesus. Because of that he had been ready when his life on this earth came to an end. As I thought about that it reminded me of the significance of our work. Our congregation, and yours, may not speak to thousands each week. The media may not be reporting on what we do. We may wonder at times if we are making a difference. But we have shared the good news of Jesus and helped some souls get ready for eternity. What could be more significant than that?

[Something to Share] unfathomable glory

“... depression
can creep
in when the
seasons change,
or when tragedy
strikes, or simply
when life turns
out differently
than I expect.”

I have to admit I've always felt somewhat akin to the dark. When no one is home, I'll turn off all the lights, brew a cup of tea, and curl up in the corner of the room with a good book and a candle or two to light the page. There's something so serene and uncomplicated about this, that — for a moment — I wonder why this favorite pastime doesn't become more of a regular habit. Then I remember why.

Darkness, like the seasons, has come and gone intermittently in my life. Often when the days grow cold and the sun rises lower and lower in the sky, darkness begins to shadow my days. I recognize the signs of it when my thoughts begin to turn inward, I nearly stop socializing with friends, and a sort of melancholy begins to take hold. Essentially, I get depressed.

The clinical term for this type of depression is Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, which is a chemical imbalance in the body due to lack of sunlight during the winter months. For me, depression can creep in when the seasons change, or when tragedy strikes, or simply when life turns out differently than I expect. It's one of those struggles — like Paul's "thorn in the flesh" — that I know will always be with me. Yet I still wonder why. Why this constant

struggle with my spirit? Why this sadness that never seems to go away? I resonate with the psalmist and cry, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?" And in a smaller, softer voice, the psalmist replies, "Put your hope in God, for you shall yet praise him, your Savior and your God."

What joy to know that our struggles are sanctifying us for a glory we cannot even fathom! What assurance to hear that the reality of Christ is the promise of new life!

In these Lenten days, we travel through dark times. Some of us practice the Lenten ritual of separating one's self for a time of spiritual formation. And, then, during Holy Week, we relive the story of Christ's betrayal, flogging, and death. Yes, the journey is long. But in the middle of the journey we find strength and hope. It's during these times the psalmist whispers, "Lift up your head, lift up your head ... that the King of glory may come in!" And, through the darkness, we usher in the glory — the glory of Christ and the resurrection dawn.

— By Jessica Hillstrom
Vision of Glory Lutheran
Plymouth, Minn.