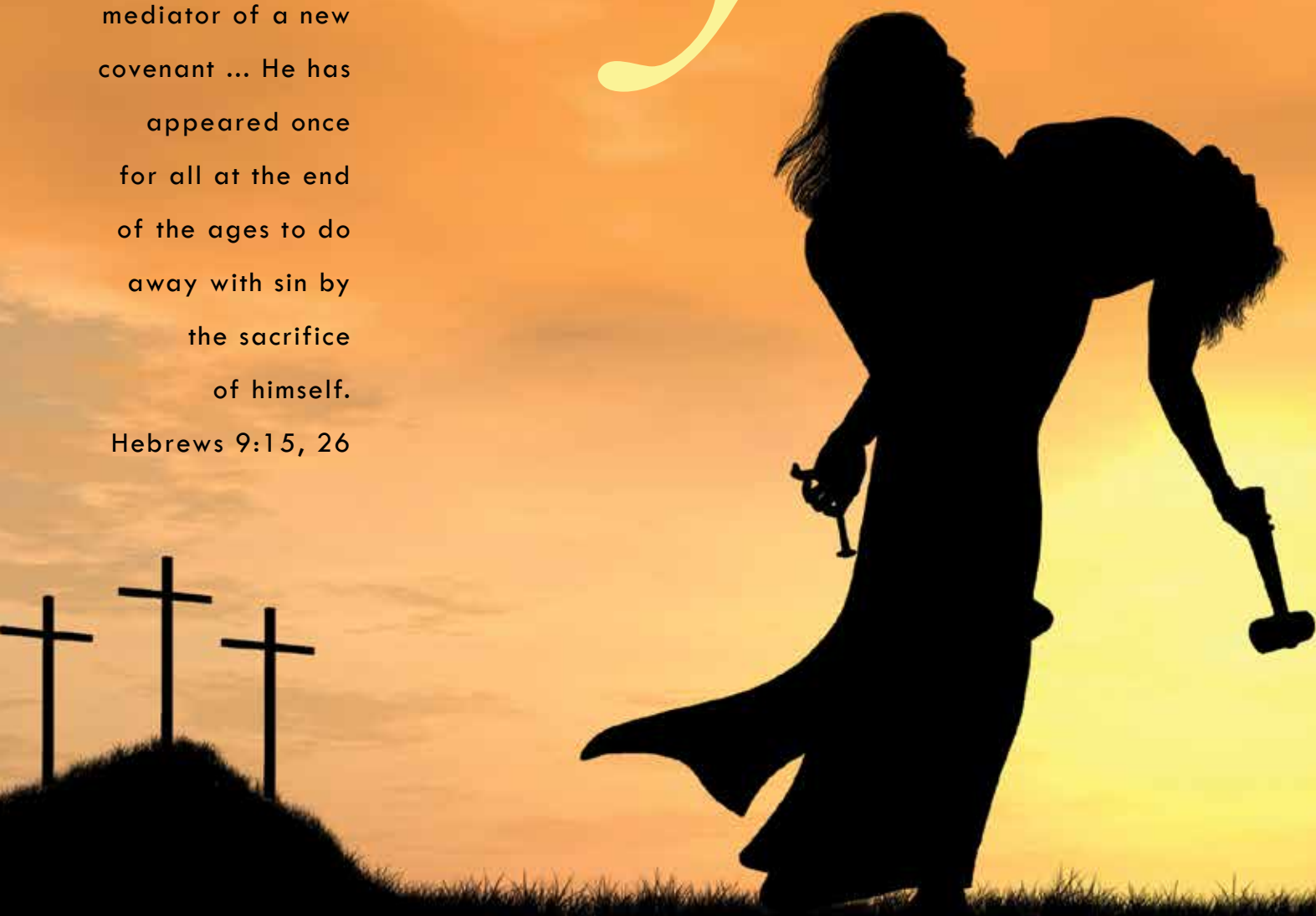


For *you*

For this reason
Christ is the
mediator of a new
covenant ... He has
appeared once
for all at the end
of the ages to do
away with sin by
the sacrifice
of himself.

Hebrews 9:15, 26



Be



content

BY PASTOR TIM HINRICHS

Have you ever woken up on “the wrong side of the bed”? Have there been days when things just don’t go your way and you find yourself saying, “It’s going to be one of those days”?

Not long ago I had one of those days. And God encouraged me with the attitude of Paul, who said, “I have learned to be content in whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11b). That has to be one of the greatest challenges we face. It seems so impossible to be content.

Certainly Paul doesn’t mean that I should be satisfied with my spiritual growth. He couldn’t mean that I should be satisfied with my family members who are unsaved. And I shouldn’t be satisfied with my personal weaknesses and failures. I should never get to the point of having enough of God’s Word, enough worship or enough of being used by God for His service. I should never have enough of being called to repent of my sins or enough of resting in the arms of Jesus through Holy Communion. These are things in which I should *never be satisfied*. I should always be hungry and thirsty for more of God.

So what is this contentment? It has to do with my *circumstances*. You see, Paul had gotten to the amazing point in his life in which he was not bent out of shape, worried or anxious because of difficult circumstances (like being thrown in prison). He went on to say that whether he faces humble circumstances or prosperity, having no food or abundance on the shelf, he is doing fine either way (vs. 12).

Nothing throws him off track. Our circumstances do not make a day good or bad.

This is such an amazing and unusual attitude that Paul calls it a “secret.” In other words, it’s a very important and generally unknown key to life. Isn’t this the kind of attitude every person craves? So what is the secret? Spending time in prayer? Memorizing Scripture? Serving the Lord?

All of these things are wonderful, but Paul says the key is that he “can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (vs. 13). No matter what gets thrown in my path today, God is going to get me through it. There is no problem, no difficulty, no tragedy that is so great that God cannot handle it. In fact, God will not only get me through it, He will also make something good out of it in the end.

The secret attitude has two parts to it. First, whenever something great and wonderful happens, we need to say, “Thank you Lord for your provision! It’s all your doing and blessing.” Give credit to Him instead of taking credit for yourself.

Second, when facing a challenge, we need to say, “Lord, it’s going to be amazing to see how You get me through this!” Instead of crumbling into fear, worry, and despair, look forward in hope, knowing that it’s God’s strength, power and provision at work — not your own. It’s not about you; it’s about God!

What does that secret attitude mean? No fear, no stress, no anger, and no worry because God can handle it. Let Him, and watch what happens!

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

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For when he died, so did your sin. And when
he rose, so did your hope. For when he rose,
your grave was changed from a final residence
to temporary housing.

— Max Lucado
“He Chose the Nails”

When Jesus bowed his head,
And dying took our place,
The veil was rent, a way was found
To that pure home of grace.

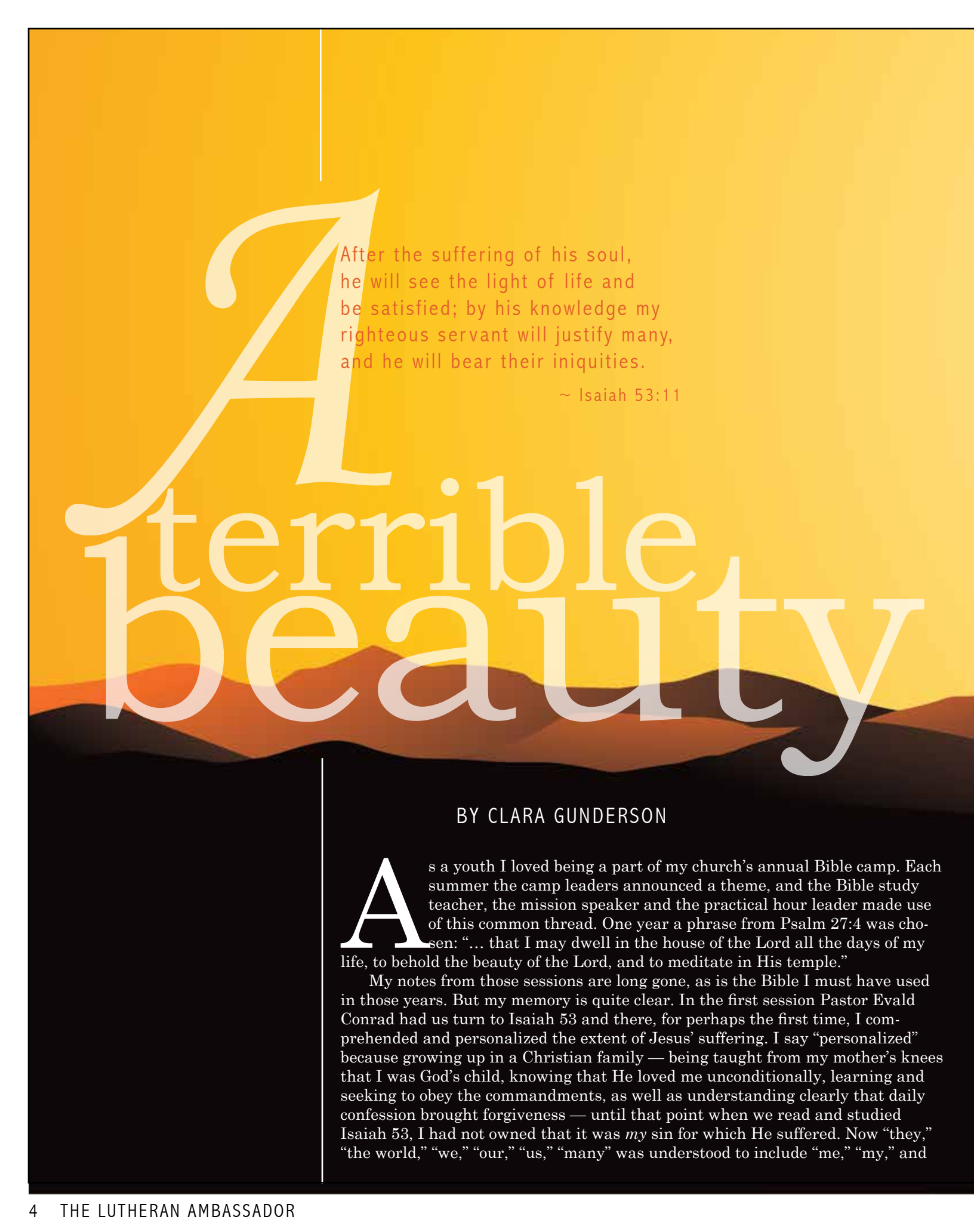
— John Elias

[The whole value of the meditation of the suffering of Christ lies in
this, that man should come to the knowledge of himself and sink and
tremble.

— Martin Luther]

Losing my wife was the most painful experience
I've ever had to face, but if the Resurrection
could get me through that, it can get me through
anything. It was good for 30 A.D., it's good for
1995, it's good for 1998, and it's good beyond
that.

— Gary Habermas



After the suffering of his soul,
he will see the light of life and
be satisfied; by his knowledge my
righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.

~ Isaiah 53:11

A terrible beauty

BY CLARA GUNDERSON

As a youth I loved being a part of my church's annual Bible camp. Each summer the camp leaders announced a theme, and the Bible study teacher, the mission speaker and the practical hour leader made use of this common thread. One year a phrase from Psalm 27:4 was chosen: "... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate in His temple."

My notes from those sessions are long gone, as is the Bible I must have used in those years. But my memory is quite clear. In the first session Pastor Evald Conrad had us turn to Isaiah 53 and there, for perhaps the first time, I comprehended and personalized the extent of Jesus' suffering. I say "personalized" because growing up in a Christian family — being taught from my mother's knees that I was God's child, knowing that He loved me unconditionally, learning and seeking to obey the commandments, as well as understanding clearly that daily confession brought forgiveness — until that point when we read and studied Isaiah 53, I had not owned that it was *my* sin for which He suffered. Now "they," "the world," "we," "our," "us," "many" was understood to include "me," "my," and



“I.” I saw the deep love of the Savior in His suffering because it was for *me*.

As I recall this awakening, this *epiphany*, and re-read this chapter now, I see again the beauty of the Lord and think of it as His “terrible beauty.” Verse 2 says He had no beauty that would make us want Him. But God saw something different. “In God’s eyes,” says the Living Bible, “he was like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground.” I understand that excitement each Spring as Dad and I plant his garden and we watch eagerly to see those first shoots. Who will see them first? Of course, Dad wins — he’s up early every morning, waiting, watching. As I arrive one morning I see him out in the garden. He calls to me, “Come and see!” And I see a tiny, tiny sprout. Sometimes he sees them when as yet I don’t. But we both know what has been planted ... we know our

efforts will produce corn, beans and squash.

God called out, too, when His tender green shoot sprouted. Luke 2 tells of the star, unlike any other, shining over the place where the child was; Matthew tells of the angels singing God’s praise and their announcement to the shepherds that a Savior had been born.

What happened? Why did this beautiful child, worshiped by shepherds and magi, become a man so hated? Rejected? Reviled? Despised? Spit upon? We’d like to worship Him as God’s babe and jump right into Easter morning, ignoring the suffering He went through. As Father Tim Kavanaugh says in *A Light From Heaven*, “I can’t receive the authentic joy of Easter morning without entering into the dark hours.” These dark hours are, to me, His terrible

(Continued on page 14)

A black and white photograph of a person standing on a grassy hill, holding a cross high in their right hand. The person is silhouetted against a bright, low sun that creates a lens flare effect. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

oh

what

joy

BY PASTOR DAVID SKORDAHL

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ” (Colossians 2:13).

Lent is usually a time of somber reflection of Jesus’ journey to the cross. The cross means crucifixion, so there is no human reason for joy during this season. On that Good Friday, when the death of Jesus appeared to be the final end to a revolutionary, there was no reason to celebrate. But hold on a bit. Could it be that there was a great celebration going on in the underworld? Were the devil and his angels having a big party, rejoicing at the death of their greatest foe?

Imagine Jesus crashing the party — “Surprise!” The *Son of God* was supposed to be dead, but here He was — alive. He had risen from the grave. The sealed tomb was empty. Satan’s joy suddenly turned to disbelief, frustration, anxiety, and anger. Their celebration came to an abrupt end. Their party was over!

In Jerusalem, a few women and a couple of disciples discovered the empty tomb. They wanted to believe, but with mixed emotions, couldn’t get themselves to do so at first. As much as they wanted to believe, it all seemed a bit too good to be true. Dead people don’t come back to life — or do they? He does, if He is the *Son of God*!

We may be a bit critical of those who were so slow to believe, but would we have believed? No, perhaps not. Later when He appeared to them in person, Luke says, “They were startled and frightened” (24:37) and they “disbelieved for joy and were marveling” (vs. 41). Eventually they came out on the side of faith, believing that Jesus was alive and having reason for great joy and celebration. For those who believed, the victory was won! The followers of Jesus turned despair and emptiness into celebration. It was their time for a party!

Here we are today, some 2,000 years later, living on this side of the cross and the empty tomb. We continue to celebrate the resurrection with great joy. There are an exhaustive number of reasons for us to celebrate this Easter joy, but let me share three with you.

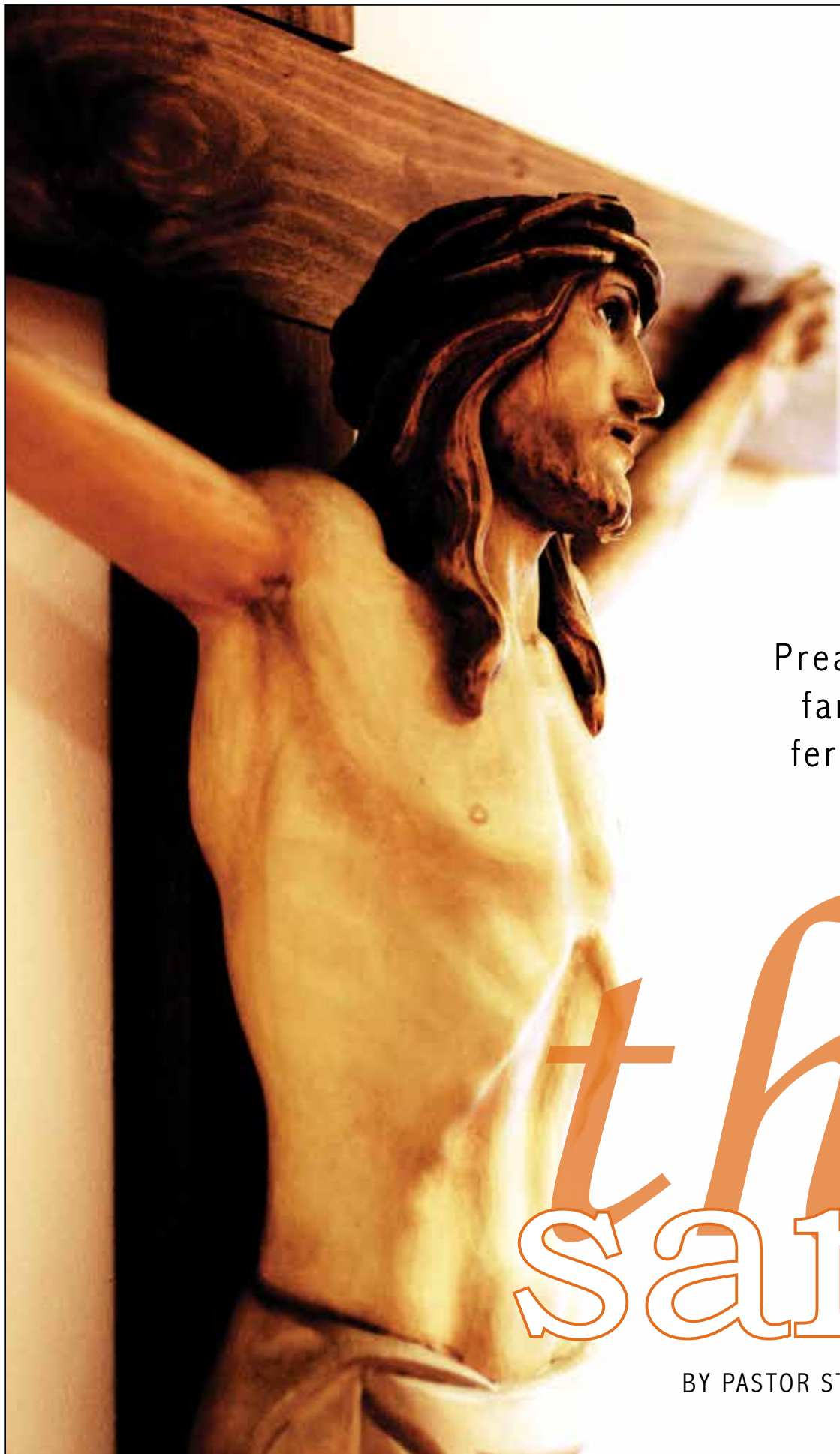
First, we celebrate Easter joy because the bonds of our sins have been broken. We have been set free. Paul wrote, “... you, who were dead in your trespasses, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us ..., by canceling the

record of debt ...” (Colossians 2:13-15). As a youth, I had a difficult time believing these verses. I was sure that to be saved, I had to please God with what I did rather than receiving what God had done for me through Jesus. Trying to be good, I never had the confidence that I was good enough. Finally, at the age of 25, I understood that I never could be good enough to earn my salvation. The Holy Spirit helped me understand that “if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). What joy it was to have that heart bondage broken. I was baptized as an infant, and neither God nor that baptism failed me. God didn’t break the covenant He made with me; I had chosen to walk away from that relationship and go on my own. Are you confident of your relationship with Jesus today? Are you secure because of His cleansing work for you?

Second, we celebrate Easter joy because even though we go through difficult circumstances, we have the risen and living Jesus who is with us and enables us to hang in there. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us to hold fast to our confession of Jesus Christ, our high priest who sympathizes with our difficulties. “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16). Today, if you are going through a difficult situation, do not let the circumstances rob you of the joy that rightfully belongs to you.

Third, we celebrate Easter joy because of the great hope and promise of heaven. For the believer, the best is yet to come! Jesus will return to earth one day, and all the believers who have died will be resurrected from the grave and be given a new and glorified body. If we who are saved should be so blessed as to still be living on earth when Jesus returns, we will be caught up with those who have been raised from the graves. We’ll move in through the gates of heaven and spend all eternity with Jesus. What a day that will be — another day of great celebration and joy!

Skordahl is serving as interim pastor of Our Savior’s Lutheran, Argyle, Minn.



Preaching the
familiar with
fervency and
freshness

the same

BY PASTOR STEVE LOMBARDO

You have been preaching at First Church for several years. Easter Sunday is coming up. The people know what you will be preaching. And more than that, they've figured out how you will preach it. They know your style, your favorite expressions, your stained-glass voice. After all, they've heard your Easter sermons before. And, although the texts may vary, the topic, of course, is always the same. You will preach the resurrection of Christ, and, in so doing, you will have 30 minutes to raise the dead!

So, then, how do you preach when everybody knows what's coming? I would submit that the preacher must have a "sanctified freshness." Freshness turns the predictable into the powerful! Being fresh in our preaching is cultivated by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He will produce a freshness — a passion — in our preaching. He will lead us to the following considerations.

First, we who preach must remember that we have been given a high calling because we proclaim things of first importance. Paul, in I Corinthians 15:3-4, writes: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ..." This is the heart of the gospel. This is the glorious priority of the preacher. The preacher is God's ambassador with a message straight from the King. He is God's representative, an official envoy of his sovereign Lord.

In Acts 10:33 Cornelius knew that Peter had a message from God, and therefore, it must be heard! "Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." What a privilege Peter was given. We have the very same opportunity every time we enter the pulpit.

Second, the proclamation, "Jesus Christ crucified ... Jesus Christ risen" is always vital and fresh. That message is certainly encouraging to believers, yet, at the same time, challenging to the unsaved. After all, there will be people in church who do not come at other times of the year. Good Friday and Easter Sunday are not times for berating people, scolding them for being "absent without leave" all the other Sundays. Instead, we focus on good news, and we are glad they've come. They will hear the Word of God, and some of them just might get saved.

Third, prior to preaching it is imperative that we lay hold of Scriptures that speak of the cross and the resurrection — not for the purpose of finding a text to preach, but for the nourishment of our own souls. We read as if discovering truth for the very first time. We glory in the grace. We ponder the purpose. We marvel at the mystery. Therefore, when the time comes to preach, we do so with hearts ablaze. Amazing — *Jesus died for me! He rose for me!* — I cannot help but boldly tell others He died and rose for them.

Fourth, we can benefit from reading some good biographies of preachers from the past. They can encourage our freshness in the pulpit. For instance, William Sangster (1900-1960) had a fruitful preaching ministry in Great Britain serving Methodist churches. He became ill with a debilitating disease, suffered muscular atrophy, and lost his voice the last year of his life. On Easter Sunday he wrote to his daughter that it was a terrible thing to wake up on Resurrection day and not have a voice with which to shout, "He is risen!" But he went on to write that it would be even more terrible to have a voice and not *want* to shout, "He is risen!" Sangster encourages us to preach at Easter. We have voices — we want to shout and we will shout, *He is risen! Alleluia!*

Fifth, we must remember the purpose of our proclamation. Warren Wiersbe says that we preach "not to explain a subject, but to attain an object." Sometimes we think we must explain the cross and the resurrection. It's an impossible task. Our hearers have not come to hear explanations, but, rather, crowning certainties of Jesus and His love.

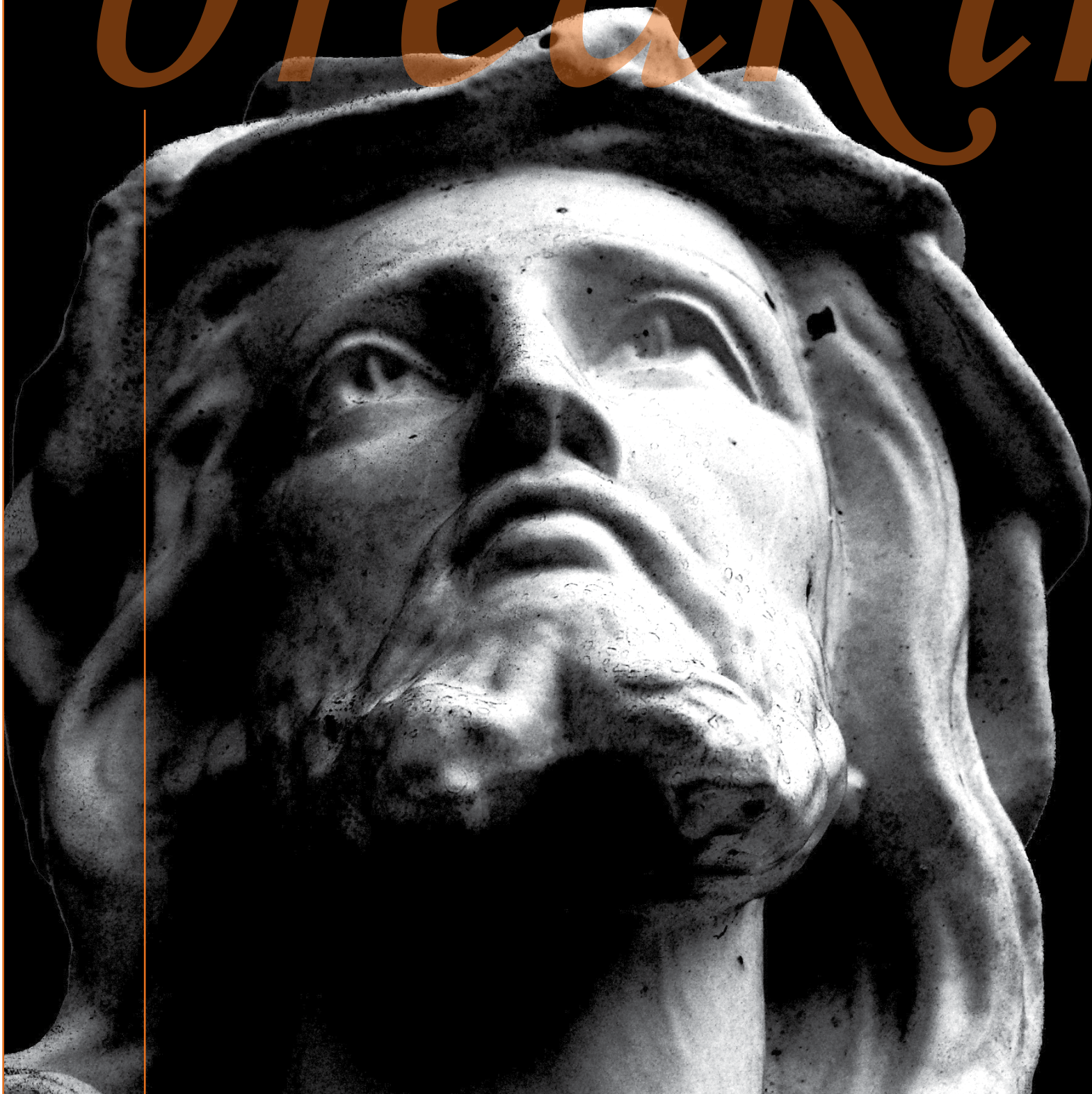
Sixth, we preach with a sense of urgency. Puritan Richard Baxter (1615-1691) described his preaching when he said, "I preached as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men." There is always an urgency when God's Word is proclaimed. Martin Luther (1483-1546) knew the gravity of preaching since he considered every sermon a battle for the souls of people.

So then, let us preach the familiar with fervency. Let us pray for "sanctified freshness." Since preaching is God speaking, there is really no other way to preach.

Lombardo is pastor of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran, Gifford, Ill.

old story

breakin



BY PASTOR JOHN KENT

ng walls

There were really only two groups of people in the world following Israel's captivity in Egypt — Israel, and everyone else. God had been the One to erect a barrier of sorts when He provided Israel with a set of ceremonial laws that made her distinct from all other people groups. Now, this barrier was in no way an impermeable one. In fact, it was meant to be porous enough for God's truth to pass through to the outside and non-Israelites to pass through to the inside whenever faith had indeed been created by the outflow of that truth. Nevertheless, Israel would have loved this barrier to be impenetrable. Over time God's porous barrier had become a solid wall of racial segregation and separation through the ugly work of Israel's religious leaders.

That's just one worrisome wall. There is an even taller, stronger and more impregnable wall that existed. This one was not built between people groups, like that dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. No, this wall stood between mankind and God Himself. And, in truth, it existed ever since Adam and Eve were ushered out of Eden. Part of what makes this barrier so sound is that on one side of it is life, health and eternity, and the other side is death, sickness and finitude. Those on the side of death may wish to get to the other side, but they cannot because dead men simply cannot climb. If the truth be told, dead men never even wish to get to God's side, either. They are spiritually dead, and this is so because of trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1).

So there it is, two barriers. There was one between the living God and His corrupted creatures, and another between one group of those creatures and the rest. God's solution for all of this is what the apostle Paul writes about with such excitement in the second chapter of Ephesians.

In Christ, God has broken down the barrier between Himself and all humanity. The suffering of Christ in Adam's place has dissolved the barrier between God and man totally, leaving absolutely no residue. And, this is not just a potential dissolution of a barrier. The barrier was actually obliterated in Christ. Paul says that "God, being rich in mercy ... even though we were dead in transgressions, made us alive together in Christ" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Everyone in our world has access to God because of Christ's work; only some have yet to believe that this is so. Without believing, they will never begin to enjoy their new "barrierless" relationship with God. This good news must get out! People everywhere must begin to believe it, or else they will face an eternity without the capacity to enjoy all the benefits of Christ's work on their behalf.

The porous barrier that God had erected in giving His ceremonial law to the Jews was finally removed by Christ's work, as well. Paul told the Gentiles, "Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh ... were separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel ... and without God in the world ... now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near" (Ephesians 2:11-13). All humanity is now unified with one another in the work of Christ — Jews and Gentiles alike. Some do not recognize that this is so, but then some still believe that the earth is flat. The reality is that Christ has both dissolved the barrier between God and man, and He has also removed all divisions between people.

The problem we face is this: Many people have not yet recognized Christ's unifying work and Lordship over all that exists. Many ignore the new world ushered in through Jesus. They continue to erect walls of hostility between themselves and others. God never intended these worthless walls, and one day they will be condemned altogether. These walls may appear as sturdy and real in our world, but this is a lie. Because of this, the family of God in Christ should treat these false walls of separation as if they were nonexistent.

Many would blame God for all of the strife, divisions, and fighting in the world. This is an enormous misunderstanding put forth in ignorance by those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. God is not a divider. On the contrary, God in Christ unites us — to Himself, and to one another. The truth is, all things truly come together in Him, and for His glory alone.

Kent is pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church, El Cajon, Calif.



on death

BY PASTOR CHRISTIAN ANDREWS

“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ

— I Corinthians 15:55-57

Just four weeks after my wife, Dienne’s, death, a well meaning friend sat with me in the lobby of a conference center and asked, “How are you doing?” I was only a month into being a widower, and already I was tiring of that question.

My answer was a sincere, “I don’t think that’s the right question.”

I should have anticipated my friend’s response, “Then, what is the right question?”

Since then I have been mulling over his request for the right way to engage the life of someone who has just lost a loved one. If there is a full answer, it seems an illusive one. Nevertheless, the following four principles may be of some help as we find the way to offer love and compassion in the middle of grief.

First, appreciate the uniqueness of every experience. If there is one thing I have learned in the grief process, it is that we all go through it differently. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (a psychiatrist and author of “On Death and Dying”) has identified five stages

through which she believes all people in grief pass. Many grief counselors and, I would guess, many of us have relied heavily on her research and assumptions. What few of us realize, perhaps, is that Kübler-Ross looks at life from outside the Christian world view. While she has rightly identified certain emotions that are typically present in the grief process, her approach and analysis seem oversimplified. There seems to be a “one size fits all” sense in the application — if not in the intent. The reality of grief is that no two of us grieve in the same way. No two of us go through the emotions in the same sequence. No two of us experience the same intensity of any stage. To suggest that because I have experienced the loss of my spouse I am able to understand someone else’s loss is naïve. I may have some deeper insight because of a shared experience, but I don’t know what the other has experienced. We need the space to live the variables that shape how we face death, knowing that each experience is unique, not to be compared.

Second, make no assumptions. I have discovered in my journey that we all seem to have some preconceived ideas about how the grief process should progress. This is true

whether we have been through the process ourselves or not. How each of us grieves is shaped by numerous variables: the depth and type of relationship we enjoyed in this life, our understanding of the sovereignty of God, our willingness to accept the sovereignty of God, our ability to cope with change, our world view, our ability to deal with feelings and emotions, our levels of pragmatism. Even in creating this list there are assumptions that we need to dispel. The grief process is not a “faith” issue. In other words, we cannot judge one’s level of faith by the way one progresses through the process. Some of us will struggle for months or years just to get

out of bed and face each day. Our “fogs” will be sometimes dense and sometimes light and sometimes quickly dissipating. Some of us will move into new relationships in what would appear to be a relatively short time. Some of us will seek to remain single. Some of us will want to remarry. There really is no such thing as “too soon” or “too late” as long as God is honored in what we do. Offer us wise counsel, but allow us to move through our grief into joy on our own God-given schedule and plan.

Then, ask real, answerable questions. The two hardest questions to answer are: “How are you doing?” and “Is there anything I can do for you?” (or even worse is the statement “Just let us know if there is anything we can do for you”; it takes more than courage for us to ask you to do something for us). Most of the time, I don’t have a clue how I am doing or what someone can do for me. Or better said, I just don’t have a measuring rod against which to answer these questions. Sometimes, I’m doing very poorly, though

it may be in ways completely unexpected. Sometimes, I am doing very well, but compared to what? “How are you doing?” is subjective and impossible to answer. In early grief, offer practical help that is directed and specific. Instead of, “Is there anything you need help with?” try “I am free Saturday morning. May I help with your lawn (or go grocery shopping for you or take you grocery shopping or do a load of laundry or bring you a meal)?”

As time progresses, try finding questions that have specific answers. I think most of us are looking for someone who will hear our answers. We are open to questions that help us talk through our experience. What have you found most surprising about your grief journey? What part of your journey has been the hardest? Is there any part of your grief process in which you have seen God work in a special way? Is there something in the process you wish you had done differently? What advice would you give to someone in your situation?

There are two very critical points to which you must commit when you ask questions. We assume you really care and you want to be of true assistance to us. When you ask a question, be ready to listen. If you don’t have time to sit for half an hour and let us pour out our hearts and tears to you, don’t ask anything. Secondly, just listen. We don’t want you to fix anything; we don’t want you to correct our theology; we don’t want platitudes. Hold us (if we want), cry with us, and listen. Your presence means more to us than anything you can say.

Finally, don’t forget us. The initial outpouring of sympathy was almost overwhelming for me. The cards kept coming for a month or two after Dienne’s death. Then came the eerie silence. I knew it was coming, so I was not surprised. My children, however, were taken off guard. I am so aware that your lives go on essentially unaffected. Ours do not. Our lives have been irrevocably changed. And while we understand you will not mourn — nor should you mourn, as we do — with the depth of grief we experience, we do so long to be remembered. It does not matter that you do not know what to say. It does not matter that your words are not eloquent. What matters is that you remember. What matters is that we know there are brothers and sisters in Christ who are with us in this often lonely journey.

I used the personal pronouns “our” and “we” regularly to relate to you some answers I’ve discovered to that searching request, “What is the right question?” I don’t want to presume or assume that everyone in grief will agree with me or find helpful for them all the things I would find of benefit to me. Yet, I can’t help but think that there is someone in our families, someone in our congregations, someone in our neighborhoods, someone in our communities who is in grief, who needs to hear and feel and know that we, God’s people, care in a deep, compassionate, and personal way. With a little time and thought we can help make the journey a lot easier.

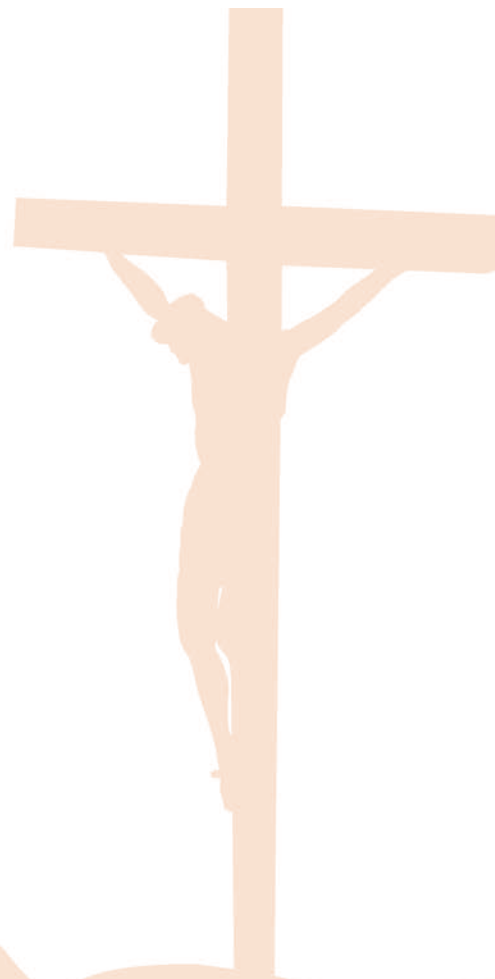
Andrews, Palmdale, Calif., is an eighth grade English teacher. He also serves Evergreen Lutheran, Phelan, Calif.

beauty ... suffering made precious because it was for *me*!

I ask myself, what crowd would I have been in during that dark time? The crowd that reviled? The one who spit? The one who ignored Him? Would I have been one to see His affliction as deserving because of His own sin? After seeking His healing, would I have hid my face as He passed by? Would I have joined His unbelieving brothers as they challenged Him to go to Judea and do His miracles where more people could see them (John 7:3-5)? Perhaps I would have denied Him, as Peter did, and found myself looking deeply into His eyes, convicted, oh so convicted of disloyalty! Maybe I would have sought Him out by night, afraid of my contemporaries — afraid, afraid, too afraid to stand up and say, “I believe You are the Christ, the Son of God.”

At this my thoughts returned to Pastor Conrad’s study on the “Suffering Servant” and the camp’s evening evangelistic service. “For You” must have been the theme because that is what is engraved on my heart. “Surely your griefs He Himself bore, your sorrows, Clara, when your friend was unkind, He carried. He was pierced through for your transgressions, your disobedience was covered. He was crushed for your sin, the sin you thought no one saw. All we like sheep have gone astray, each of us (you, Clara) has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”

The terrible sin of mankind, on Him, the innocent lamb — beautiful because of His innocence; rejected, despised,



hated, smitten of God because of the sin of the world.

The prophet Isaiah, however, sees further yet into the future. It’s as if he has witnessed the awful tragedy of Christ’s death on the cross but is looking forward to the glory that will come. Verse 10 in the Living Bible reads: “... but when His soul has been made an offering for sin, then he shall have a multitude of children, many heirs. He shall live again and God’s program shall prosper in his hands.”

Turning to the book of Acts, chapter 8, we read an exciting story of God’s program prospering. The Holy Spirit speaks directly to Philip, telling him to join a chariot that is traveling on a desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza. In the chariot is an official of Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. Philip hears him reading from Isaiah and asks, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

“Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?” answered the man, and he invites Philip to come and sit by him and explain the passage.

The Ethiopian had been reading Isaiah 53, the very passage we’ve been dwelling on just now! “Please tell me,” he says to Philip, “of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?”

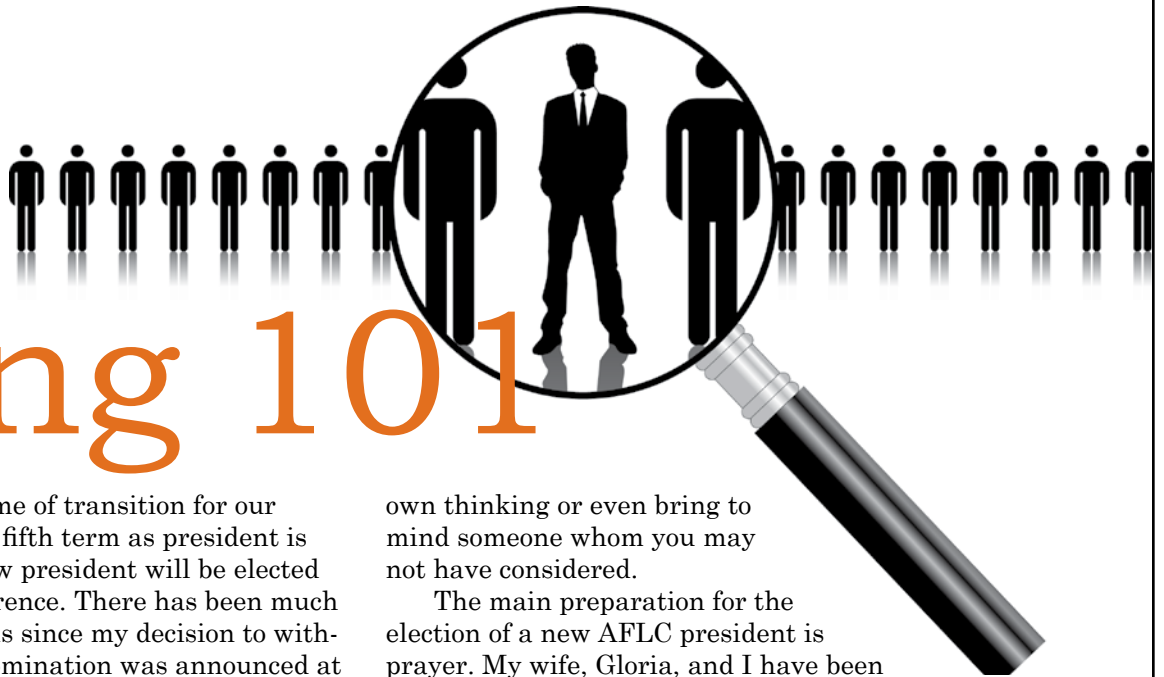
The writer of Acts says, “And Philip opened his mouth and beginning from this Scripture, he preached Jesus to him.”

The account goes on to say that the man asked to be baptized, and coming upon some water, Philip baptized him. Separating from each other, the Ethiopian goes “on his way rejoicing” while Philip continues to preach the gospel in other cities.

A soul was saved that day, an heir of Christ, the purpose of His suffering accomplished. It was the work of the Holy Spirit, as it was for me when as a youth I saw the beauty of the Lord in His suffering.

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

voting 101



The year 2007 is a time of transition for our AFLC family as my fifth term as president is completed and a new president will be elected at the annual conference. There has been much discussion about this since my decision to withdraw my name from further nomination was announced at the conference last year, and the need for careful clarification of our procedures is evident.



Pastor Robert Lee

It was at the 1989 Annual Conference in Minot, N.D., that a new method of electing our national officers was adopted, as recommended by the Coordinating Committee. Called an “ecclesiastical ballot” system, this procedure begins with a nominating ballot, which will probably result in a large number of names submitted. No nominations will come from the Nominating Committee, and no nominations will come from the floor. There is an opportunity for nominees to request that their names be withdrawn when the results of this first ballot are announced. Seventy-five percent or more of the votes cast is necessary for an election to take place on this nominating ballot.

The second ballot will probably include a smaller number of names. (When I was first elected in 1992, there were 23 names listed on ballot No. 2.) A majority of votes cast will be required for election, which still may be a high threshold to reach, thus possibly requiring a third or even fourth ballot before an election is declared. The name of the nominee receiving the fewest number of votes is eliminated with each ballot, so it is possible that there could be many ballots cast before only two nominees remain.

There are no interviews taking place prior to the conference. Members of the Coordinating Committee will not submit nominations. So what should properly take place prior to the conference? In my report to the previous conference I cautioned against politics, but this does not mean that people should not be discussing the election beforehand. Possible candidates may be mentioned without any plotting involved, and this might help to clarify your

own thinking or even bring to mind someone whom you may not have considered.

The main preparation for the election of a new AFLC president is prayer. My wife, Gloria, and I have been praying for him since I assumed the office 15 years ago, that the Lord will be preparing him (and his family) for a fruitful time of service to our church family. What’s the second most important preparation? Prayer. And the third? Prayer. Anything else is so far down the list that we don’t even have to bother numbering it.

I have been asked to prepare a job description, and that I will do, yet God may be preparing someone with different gifts than mine who will accomplish things that have been neglected. That’s why it’s best that the office should not be a lifelong one.

Some concerns have been expressed to me. Isn’t the procedure a dangerous one? Do we dare to trust God to guide through the conference? Don’t we need some safeguards? There isn’t a clear choice! The AFLC could be moved away from its principles by the election of the wrong candidate!

Thus we are faced with a powerful reminder that our association is essentially a spiritual movement, standing under the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God alone. When we reorganized in 1962 there were those of like convictions who chose not to stand with us, stating that there was no one of the stature of Lutheran Free Church founder Georg Sverdrup to lead in this new beginning. We could not argue with them. Yet the Lord, in His sovereignty, chose to use lesser lights to advance the cause of free and living Lutheran congregations, and we give Him all the glory.

The AFLC was not dependent on any one individual in 1962-63, and this has not changed. Our help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:2). Join me, then, in prayerfully looking forward to a new chapter in the life of the AFLC, as the Lord provides a prepared servant to be our new president.



were you there?

BY DAWN JOHNSON

Give me an undivided heart for You

Sioux Falls hosts WMF national convention

Join us June 12 for the WMF National Convention in Sioux Falls, S.D. Women from across the nation will gather together for a day of reviving the soul and guiding the heart.

Speakers under the theme "An Undivided Heart" from Psalm 86:11, will be:

- Jane Emerson, the 2007 Bible study writer
- Laurie Nash, "The Role of Women"
- Linda Korhonen, "An Effective Devotional Life"
- Pastor Paul Nash, "Fear"

We look forward to seeing you again this year as we renew old friendships, form new ones, worship the Lord together, and ask the Spirit to speak to our hearts.

Convention information and a registration form will be printed in an upcoming issue of "The Lutheran Ambassador."

Most of us are acquainted with the song, "Were You There?" This song asks some personal questions that we should stop to ponder, especially at Easter. No, we weren't there when Christ was crucified. So how does it relate to us?

"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Think about what Christ did when He allowed Himself to be crucified. What an awful way to die. Yet He was willing to face this death because of His great love for us. He was willing to pay the penalty for our sins even before we committed them. In I Peter 2:24 we read, "He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." What a love. What a Savior. All we need to do is receive His gift of salvation and forgiveness.

"Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?" We were the reason He was nailed to the tree. We are just as guilty of putting Christ on the cross as the one who hammered the nails into Him. Isaiah 53:6 says, "... but the Lord caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." Even though we weren't even born when He was crucified, He died to pay the penalty for any sin that would be committed by us now, by others before us and by those who will inhabit this earth after us.

"Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?" Our Savior came to earth and lived in this world just like you and I do. He experienced hunger pains, love, loss and everything in the span of life from birth to death (Philippians 2:6-8). As an adult He experienced the pain of rejection not only by strangers, but by His closest disciples.

"Were you there when God rose up from the grave?" The love of God doesn't stop at the tomb. Christ's life didn't end on the cross. He rose from the grave victorious over sin, death and the devil. I Corinthians 15:55-57 reads, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." As God's children, we can claim that victory through Christ.

What an example He is to us all. He gave His life so that we may have life — eternal life with Him. When we are faced with various trials, despair, depression or even the death of our physical bodies, we can know that He is there to carry us through. What a victory to claim — eternal life with Christ.

Johnson, Wilson, Wis., is the WMF Executive Secretary.

resources

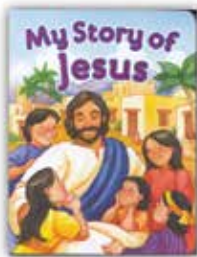
763-545-5631 or email parished@aflc.org

Easter and Lent



Family Celebrations at Easter

Enrich your family's understanding of Easter through daily devotional reading, discussion questions, prayer, and optional further study for adults. Includes extra projects, music, and a Passover celebration for the Christian family. \$8



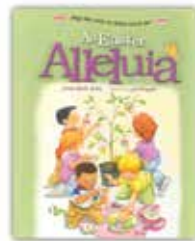
My Story of Jesus

Children learn answers to questions about Jesus as they follow His life on earth from His birth to His death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, and look forward to His coming again. Board book \$6.95, coloring book \$2.70



He is Risen! Alleluia!

This worship service for Easter morning includes 12 pages of Scripture lessons, hymns, and responsive prayer. \$.75



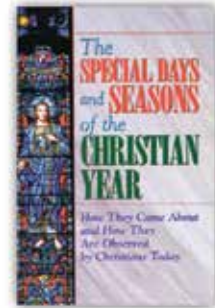
An Easter Alleluia

Young children will love these beautiful pictures and the rhyming story about Jesus based on Matthew 28:1-10 that can be sung to the tune of "Jesus Loves Me." \$8



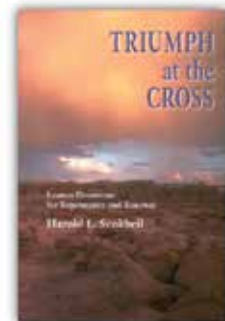
Hallelujah, What a Savior!

Real-life stories behind 25 favorite Lent and Easter hymns. Each chapter includes complete music score and lyrics, Scripture, meditation, and prayer. \$8



Special Days & Seasons of the Church Year

Observing the Christian Church Year, we celebrate the central mystery of our faith: the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This helpful booklet provides families, worship committee members, Christian educators, and pastors with a concise overview of information regarding the cycle of the Church Year. \$4



Triumph at the Cross

Daily Lenten devotional meditations reassure believers that Christ restores, renews, and cleanses broken hearts through faith in Him. Includes six Sunday passion narratives and a closing Easter Sunday meditation. \$11



Members of the Sverdrup Society met Jan. 26 on the campus of the AFLC schools to host a discussion forum. Pastor Terry Olson, Grafton, N.D., (pictured above) led a session on "The Servant Pastor." Dr. Francis Monseth, Pastor Martin Horn and Pastor Robert Lee also led sessions on The Fundamental Principles and their relationship to AFLC doctrine and the congregations. Discussion forums are open to the public.



Three new members were received in January at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Whitestown, Ind. Pictured (left to right) are Dee Tremblay, Johnny Kivett, Aaron Ray and Pastor Greg Higbee.

Holt accepts youth ministries directorate

Will begin new work starting Aug. 1

BY PASTOR ALAN ARNESON

Pastor Jason Holt, Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., has accepted the call to be the next AFLC Youth Ministries director. Holt has been serving as associate pastor of Youth and Family Ministries for the past eight years at Calvary Free Lutheran. He and His wife, Jennifer, have five children, Caleb, 10; Susanna, 8; Phoebe, 6; Magdalena, 4; and Micah, 2.



Pastor Jason Holt

Holt has also been a member of the Free Lutheran Youth committee for six years, serving two years as vice-president and four years as president. He has been active in both district and national youth ministry planning as well as an international mission trip to Brazil. We give thanks to God for His provisions and are excited to welcome Holt into this position beginning Aug. 1.

Holt will replace Pastor Kevin Olson, who has resigned from the position effective July 31 to begin a distance education program for the AFLC.

Arneson, who serves Calvary Free Lutheran, Fosston, Minn., is chairman of the AFLC Youth Board.



Twelve new members were received Dec. 3, 2006, at St. Olaf Evangelical Lutheran Church, Montgomery, Ill. Pastor Jeff Swanson (front row, center) is pictured with the group.

growing in faith

BY PASTOR DAN GILES

Our little congregation in Jerez, Mexico, a work that began just seven years ago, is taking root in the community and growing. During the past couple of years we have had several setbacks and a number of wonderful, happy experiences. We have laughed and cried with new Christians, old ones, and Christians who experienced wonderful victories. We've also shared with Christians who fell into sin. Some of them repent and return to following Jesus; a few leave and are not seen again.

The week before we left for furlough late last summer, we had the joyful experience of a wedding between two members of our congregation. But the experience was bittersweet because the bride and groom were just 17 years old and already expecting their first baby. The bride was a young lady whom we baptized when she was born during our ministry in Aguascalientes. This couple is especially close to our hearts.

My wife, Debbie, and I are on a short furlough in the United States. Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk, with their three daughters, continue the work together with our daughter, Ingrid. After finishing college in the U.S., Ingrid has returned to Mexico as a short-term assistant.

With Ingrid's translation expertise added to the team, the Spanish Sunday school curriculum is getting done much more quickly than before. We now have four years' worth of materials posted on the internet site (www.iglesi-aluteranalibre.org). We have had more than 1,000 downloads of the material from this web site each month, so it is already being used.

The Free Lutheran Church in Spain (*Iglesia de Cristo Evangélica Luterana de España*) has asked Debbie and me to spend several months each year there helping them get established. Four years ago I helped them write their constitution. They also want us to relieve Pastor Eduardo Dominguez so that he can travel periodically to Colombia, where he and his wife, who is Colombian, have planted a congregation. How we will be able to respond to this call and in what ways we can best help are still matters of prayer. We would appreciate your prayers as we seek God's will on this matter.

Giles and his wife, Debbie, are AFLC missionaries in Jerez, Mexico.



Chmiels leave for Ukraine

AFLC missionaries will begin youth ministry work with EEMN

Pastor Tomasz and Miriam Chmiel will leave March 6 to begin mission work in Lviv, Ukraine. On loan to East European Missions Network, the couple were commissioned as AFLC missionaries at the Annual Conference last June in Warm Beach, Wash.

The Chmiels recently completed an intensive five-week training course at Mission Training International in Colorado Springs, Colo. While there they studied language acquisition techniques and mission preparation through cross-cultural training. Both are graduates of the AFLC's Ministry Training Institute and AFLBS. Tomasz is a 2006 graduate of AFLTS.

The Chmiels plan to work in youth ministries with the German Lutheran Church.

Annual Conference housing information available

The AFLC Annual Conference will be held June 12-15 at Sioux Falls Christian Schools in Sioux Falls, S.D. Hosts Abiding Savior Free Lutheran and Living Word Free Lutheran have compiled a list of housing options, listed below.

A. Ramkota Best Western Hotel, \$79.99/night. This hotel functions as a great location for families. Although it is the farthest from our main conference facility, it boasts of outdoor and indoor water parks, which are included in the conference rate. Call (605) 336-0650 and ask for the AFLC conference rate.

B. Holiday Inn City Centre, \$84/night. Located in downtown

Sioux Falls. Many restaurant and visitor opportunities exist nearby, including the city's namesake Sioux Falls. This will serve as the main location for AFLC staff and some evening receptions. Call (605) 339-2000 and ask for the AFLC conference rate.

C. Ramada Limited, \$69/night. Call (605) 330-000 ask for AFLC conference rate.

D. Red Roof Inn, \$51.99/night/single or \$57.99/night/double. Call (605) 361-1864 ask for AFLC conference rate.

E. Sheraton Hotel & Convention Center, \$94/night. Connected to the Sioux Falls Convention Center

and Canary Stadium, it boasts of a newly added business addition and a wonderful atrium environment. Call (605) 331-0100 and ask for the AFLC conference rate.

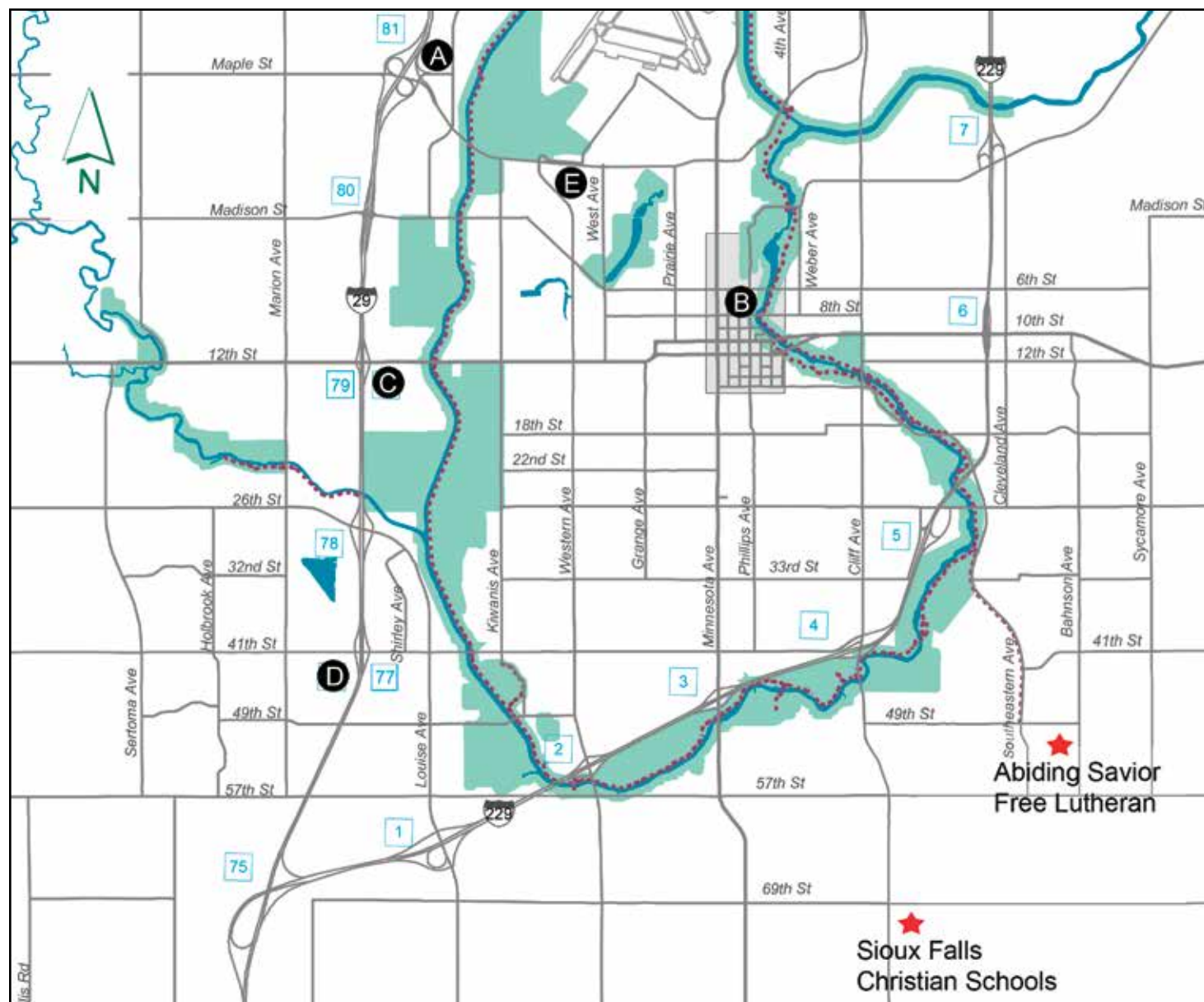
Camping

• **Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park,** Call (800) 638-9043 or visit www.jellystonesiouxfalls.com.

• **KOA,** Call (800) 562-9865 or visit www.koa.com.

• **Red Barn RV Park,** Tea, S.D. Call (605) 368-2268.

Conference registration forms, child care and meal information will be published in the April *Ambassador* and online (www.2007aflc.org) beginning March 15.



unexpected encounter



BY PASTOR PAUL KNEELAND

Have you ever been startled to see someone you didn't expect to see? I know a woman who says she actually felt her heart stop beating when she unexpectedly saw her son.

I was living in Montana when I was startled like that — a long way from Minneapolis, where two young men from our church were attending AFLBS. I received a phone call on a Friday from one of the boys saying that they were going to drive through the night on Saturday to arrive for church on Sunday morning. "And one more thing ... no one is expecting us, so no one is to know," he said. "We want it to be a surprise. We'll call you when we get there."

I received the next call about 10 minutes before the service was to start. I told them to park behind the church and then snuck them in the back door where they quietly waited in a room behind the altar area.

I was in charge of the welcome and opening announcements that Sunday. The greeting time went as usual, and I proceeded to work through all the announcements for that week. Then, in a bit of a twist, I introduced a couple of visiting missionaries. The eyes of congregants began looking around to see who I was talking about. Finally, the two boys entered through the door I was standing next to.

The first response was a group effort to inhale all the air in the room. (It must have been at this point that the heart of mom No. 1 stopped beating!) The second response saw both mom No. 1 and mom No. 2 jump to their feet and run up to the front of the church to embrace their sons. It was a very emotional encounter!

I think of this story as Easter nears because it reminds me of how the women who were running from the tomb may have felt when they unexpectedly encountered the risen Christ. Wow! What a heart-stopping moment that must have been!

It is our hope as members of the FLY Committee to see many heart-stopping moments at this summer's FLY Convention, "Unshackled," held July 2-7 in

Estes Park, Colo. There will be many youths who won't be expecting it, but Jesus wants to meet them there. Many will arrive with their minds all caught up in other things that are holding them captive. It may be a startling moment to some, but Jesus desires to unshackle them and set them free.

Isaiah 61:1 says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners."

There will be other youths going up to worship at Estes Park who will be arriving in full anticipation of meeting with Jesus and seeing Him at work there.

Please join us in prayer for all these youths, for those who desire and expect to see Jesus, and for those who may be startled at Estes and meet Jesus unexpectedly.

Kneeland, Sioux Falls, S.D., is president of FLY. For more information on the FLY Convention and to download a brochure and registration form, visit www.aflconline.org/youth.



AFLC Memorials

► January

AFLBS

Ellen Krogh
Amos Stolee
Doris Holland
Roger Swenson
Myrtle Broden

AFLTS

Ellen Krogh (2)
Amos Stolee
Doris Holland

General Fund

Amos Stolee

Home Missions

Otto Sigerud
Helen Wold
Rey Anderson

Parish Education

Mary Hill

Vision

Ellen Krogh

WMF

Lillian Herren

Alice Olson
Martha Andersen
Elma Lunning
Adell Offesdahl
Craig Johnson
Evelyn Hoseth
Lorrayne Harder
Geneva Elissen
Ida Solberg
Ellen Krogh
Carolyn Dyrud

World Missions

Theresa Enderlein
Ida Solberg
Clarence Haven

... in honor of

AFLBS

Helen Wold

AFLTS

Helen Wold

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Pastor Connely Dyrud, MTI instructor, will travel March 16-30 to Slovakia to meet with students **Brenda Waterworth** and **Rachel Eggert**, who are serving their Ministry Training Institute internship in an English language school under the direction of MTI graduate **Paul Blom**.

Pastor Karl Anderson, Our Savior's Lutheran, Argyle, Minn., has accepted a call to serve Message of Hope Parish, Bagley, Minn., including Rice Free Lutheran, Bagley, and Alida Lutheran, Shevlin, Minn. **Pastor David Skordahl** is serving as interim pastor at Our Savior's, Argyle.

Pastor Phil Hooper, St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif., has accepted a call to serve St. John's Lutheran, Duluth, Minn. He began his ministry there in January.

June Bodsberg, 87, of Amery, Wis., widow of Pastor Harry Bodsberg, died Oct. 13, 2006. The service was Oct. 20 at Amery, with Pastor Richard Gunderson officiating. Surviving are two daughters, Jacqueline Gaffey and Victoria Galush; one sister, Peggy Morehead; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Clarification: Fern Bohling, a member of the AFLC Board of Parish Education, wrote the article reviewing "The Apostle of Norway" (Feb./pg. 16). Her name was inadvertently left off.

Letter to the Editor

Large-print hymnal has been an asset to his ministry

A day doesn't go by without using the blue hymnal. This has been my evaluation of the large-print hymnal that the AFLC has made available. Called "Hymns of Faith and Promise," the hymns are taken from the AFLC Ambassador hymnal.

As a chaplain in two nursing homes, I have found that singing is a major part of this ministry. Actually, we have various hymnals to pick songs from, but it is almost always "the blue one" that is used. And not just by me, but by most of the song leaders, be they pastors or otherwise.

What is often commented on is the variety of styles offered in the 205 songs included in the hymnal. They are the familiar, traditional and gospel songs loved by many. There are songs for each season of the year, too, like Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and patriotic holidays. I am pleased by how well the binding has held up, also.

I would like to encourage pastors and church members alike to consider using this hymnal. It can actually be used in your church for those who need a large-print option, as its hymn numbers correspond with the Ambassador hymnal. You could also introduce the hymnal to your nursing homes and assisted living facilities as a great hymnal for the elderly. Or it can be used as the pianist copy, too. If you would like to promote it, as I am doing, or look at it for yourselves, contact the Parish Education department at AFLC headquarters: (763) 545-5631. They would be glad to loan out as many samples as you need. Just like the Ambassador hymnal, you will enjoy it immensely.

Pastor Paul Pillman

*Chaplain at the American Lutheran Homes
Menomonie and Mondovi, Wis.*

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Jan. 31, 2007

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$361,225	\$47,997	\$47,997	13
Youth Ministries	73,114	6,120	6,120	8
Evangelism	108,236	7,833	7,833	7
Parish Education	107,052	8,080	8,080	8
Seminary	216,097	18,668	18,668	9
Bible School	343,545	24,997	24,997	7
Home Missions	316,413	27,910	27,910	9
World Missions	287,808	25,636	25,636	9
Personal Support	407,198	68,579	68,579	17
TOTALS	\$2,220,688	\$235,821	\$235,821	11
TOTALS 2006	\$1,994,798	\$165,228	\$165,228	8

Goal 8%

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

not your average SAVIOR

On the TV show “24” Jack Bauer saves the U.S. from nuclear attacks, terrorists, corrupt politicians and various other disasters. He is strong and assertive as he stands up for what is right. He beats up bad guys and does whatever is necessary in order to defeat evil and protect the innocent. He makes for an attractive type of savior.

The Jews of Jesus’ day would have liked Jack Bauer.

They wanted a tough guy who would stand up to the Romans and run the oppressors out of Judea. That was the kind of savior they were looking for.

They weren’t expecting the Savior to be a suffering servant. When “Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things ... Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him: ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never hap-

pen to you!’” (Matthew 16:21-22, NIV). Suffering didn’t fit with what Peter expected the Savior to do.

Jesus is a different kind of Savior. “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3). Instead of yelling at His opponents to be quiet, it was said of Him: “He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets.” He doesn’t stomp on all who wander astray. He treats people with such care that “a bruised reed he will not break” (Matthew 12:19-20). He described Himself as “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29).

It is tempting to think we need Christian leaders who are as assertive and aggressive as the world. We look for ones who will beat up the evolutionists in a verbal debate, strike fear in the pro-abortionists and shout into submission those who don’t accept the authority of Scripture.

Implied in this thinking is the mistaken thought that we’re by nature on the side of the good guys. We think if justice comes it’ll be good for us.

Someone wrote, “When I looked at the world, I prayed for justice. But then I looked at myself and I prayed for mer-

cy.” A savior who administers justice without mercy would be bad news for us. We are not innocent victims in need of a protector. We are sinners in need of forgiveness. Jesus came not just to save us from the forces around us, but from the sin within us. He came to take on Himself the punishment we deserve. Joseph was told, “You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

The guy who punches out evildoers makes for a good TV hero. But to be saved, we needed the suffering Servant.

We needed a Savior who would suffer in our place, who “took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, ... was pierced for our transgressions, ... was crushed for our iniquities; ... was led like a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:4, 5, 7). The guy who punches out evildoers makes for a good TV hero. But to be saved, we needed the suffering Servant. For us to be brought into a right relationship with God, we needed Jesus to give His life as the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

The night before Jesus went to the cross He gave His disciples and us one final lesson. It was not instructions in how to beat the Pharisees in a philosophical debate. Instead He wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water into a basin, and washed His disciples’ feet. After He did this most humble of deeds He said, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:14-15).

The dynamic TV hero can be fun to watch, but it is the suffering Servant who gives us life. It is the humble Servant who washes feet whom we are called to follow.



Pastor Craig Johnson

something to share

buffet of life

BY SANDY WEAVER

The Easter season finds me re-evaluating my witness for Jesus. Being reminded of what

He has done for me when all I deserve is death inspires me to examine my testimony for Him. Unbiased self-examination is not an easy thing to do because we are forced to ask ourselves the hard questions: “Am I too busy for God to use me?” and “Are there flaws in my integrity?”

I struggle as I choose which responsibilities to accept, just as I struggle with what to take as I go through a buffet line. Everything looks good. My mouth waters as I pick some of this and more of that, always ending up with too much on my plate. My schedule gets overloaded for the same reason. It all looks good.

God has a plan for each of us. If we ask, He will reveal His plan to us and direct our every step, giving us the grace and the time to follow through. Within that plan, I believe God’s priority for every believer is the Great Commission. “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 29:19-20).

One essential witnessing tool is time — time for the Word, time to pray, time to be a friend, time to listen between the lines in order to hear the heart’s cry, time to lend a helping hand, time to respond and time to disciple.



We must choose wisely as we pass through the buffet of life, always seeking God’s priorities and making sure we don’t get too busy to be an effective witness.

Dictionary.com defines integrity as adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty. The antonyms — words meaning the opposite — are dishonesty, division, promiscuity, disagreement and inconsistency.

Let’s take a look at what the Bible says about integrity. “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity” (Titus 2:7). Jesus, our example, was a man of integrity. Mark 12:14a tells us, “They came to Him and said, Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity.” I Chronicles 29:17 says, “I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity.”

How is your witness? Is your life too busy to hear the Holy Spirit’s promptings? How would you rate your integrity if someone else were wearing it? This is the best way to judge our integrity because we are not so quick to justify another person’s actions. To identify lack of integrity we must each take an honest look into our own heart. If we don’t like what we see, there’s no need to despair beyond repenting. Make a change and accept God’s grace. Join me in making Easter a time to re-evaluate your witness for the Savior.

Weaver is a member of Zoar Lutheran, Hampden, N.D.