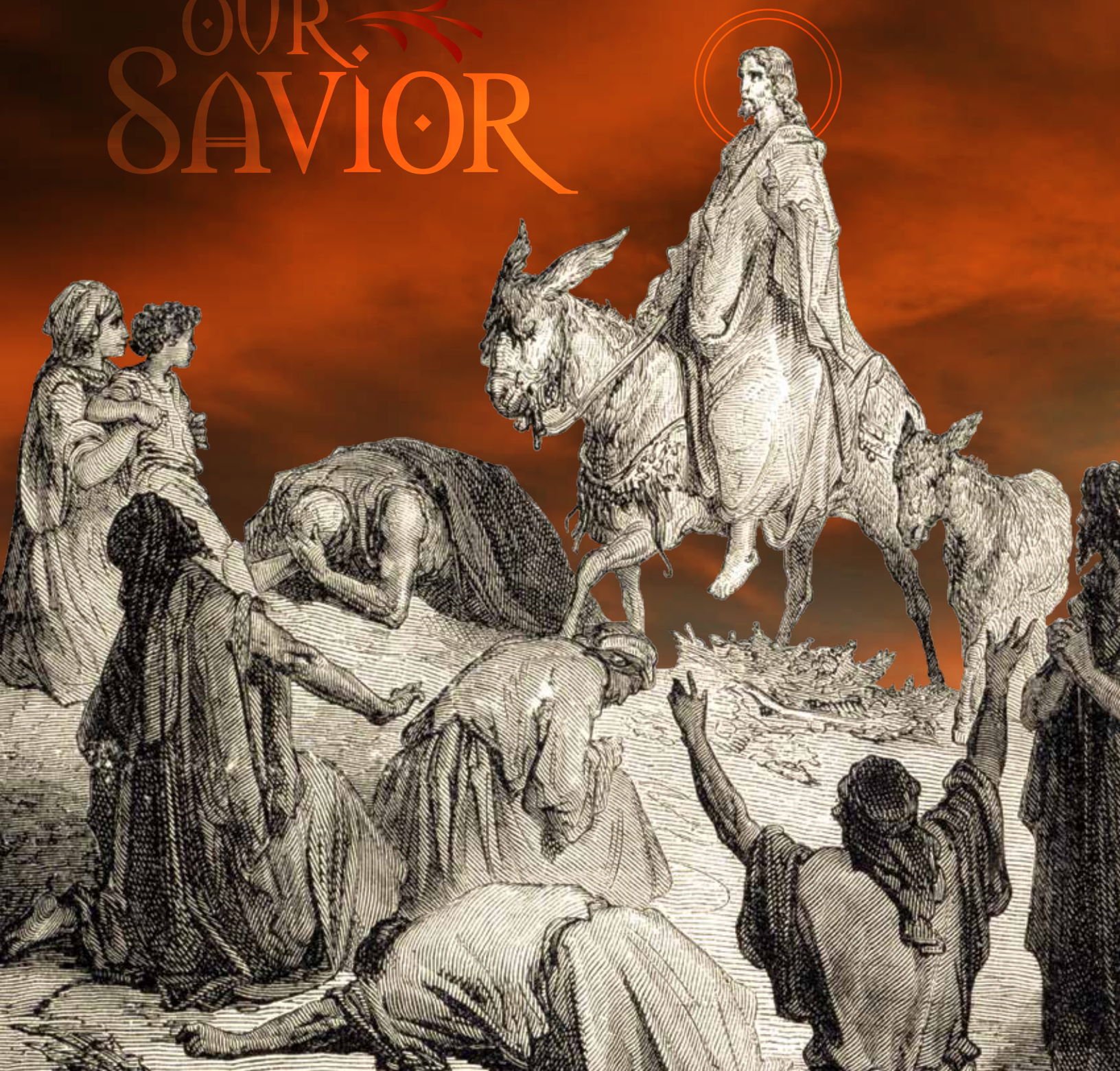


THE LUTHERAN 

MARCH 2009

AMBASSADOR

OUR
SAVIOR



Pride's



fall

BY PASTOR HERB HOFF

So, what type of skier are you?" I've heard the question more times than I can count, and have even asked the question a few times myself.

This time was different; this time a nurse was asking the question, and she was asking it of me.

The possible answers are simple: beginner, intermediate, advanced and expert. I have been proud to be able to answer the question for most of the last 50 years with the final category.

But the words didn't come easily this time. This time my head was securely immobilized by a neck brace and I was strapped to a body board with more rope and Velcro than the worst of criminals who has come under the controlling power of Spider-Man.

"So what type of skier are you?" asked the nurse.

"Well this time yesterday I would have said expert. But right now I would have to say hurting."

Skiing this day had been different. A couple years ago pride swelled in my heart when I overheard Frank, my best ski buddy, say to friends at church, "If pastor says anything about skiing, believe him. He can do what he says." Frank and I are pretty much equals when we wear skis and boots.

Reasons for pride in my skiing were numerous. My parents had me skiing when the years of my life were fewer than the fingers of my right hand. I was a Swedish skier of Swedish skiers. Lessons, I didn't need lessons; I was too advanced for that. In high school I would sport a glorious tan (actually wind burn) when most of the rest of my classmates were the color of grey paste from Seattle's rainy, sunless winter. As a senior in high school I

skied for Crystal Mountain's Ski Patrol.

Last year I led the junior confirmation students down a nearby hill, encouraging them on as I would show them how easy it was.

This year the senior confirmands were waiting for me as I, out of breath, nursed my screamingly sore leg muscles. My pride would love to blame the difficulties on the blood donation the day before, or the extreme altitude at Heavenly (but we were all at the same altitude) or even being out of shape since it was only my first time on skis this season.

But my pride sometimes needs to give way to reality. Skiing has changed because I am changing. An especially quick change came near the end of my last run. Five days after my fall, the X-rays, MRI and the neurosurgeon's examination revealed a spinal cord injury. I experienced that as numbness and pain in my right arm and hand.

As I write, I am less than three days away from a surgery that will give me some fancy new accessories: a couple of titanium plates fixed to my spine and donor bone from a body a grieving family was willing to donate for someone they don't even know.

I am humbled by God's merciful love. I am thrilled that my fall was no surprise to God. I am appreciative that He used the hands of the ski patrol, medical experts and brothers and sisters all around the nation who on bended knee hold me before the throne of grace. Thank you, family.

Hoff serves St. Ansgar's Free Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

March 2009 >>

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR vol. 47, no. 3

Editor Pastor Craig Johnson
craigj@teleport.com

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

Editorial Board Oryen Benrud
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor James L. Johnson

The Lutheran Ambassador (USPS 588-620 ISSN 0746-3413) is published monthly by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. AFLC headquarters and publications office is at 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Phone (763) 545-5631; fax 763-545-0079.

For subscription changes and information: The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. 763-545-5631 or e-mail at luthamb@aflc.org.

Subscription rates:
\$17 a year, Group Rate, U.S.
\$18 a year, Individual, U.S.
\$20 a year, International
Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

By the atoning death of His Son God has removed that which hindered Him from forgiving His enemies. Now God can, unhindered and unbound, overwhelm His enemies with His boundless love.

— O. Hallesby
God's Word for Today

[The resurrection is not merely important to the historic Christian faith; without it, there would be no Christianity. It is the singular doctrine that elevates Christianity above all other world religions.]

— Adrian Rogers

If Christ was not raised, His death was in vain, your faith in Him would be pointless, and your sins would still be counted against you with no hope of spiritual life.

— John MacArthur

God proved His love on the Cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, "I love you."

— Billy Graham



SEPARATE NO MORE

BY PATRICIA BALLMANN





HAVE YOU EVER STOOD BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR, TRYING TO COMMUNICATE to someone on the other side? If you're like me, you don't find that predicament very pleasant. Isolation. Rejection. One-sided conversation. These words come to mind when I recall the closed-door conversations I've had in the past. Ultimately, when I'm in that situation, my goal becomes breaking down the barriers between us so I can have a face-to-face, heart-to-heart conversation with that person.

In a similar manner, though on a cosmic scale, we had a closed door between God and us because of our sin. This barrier was visibly portrayed in the Temple through the hanging of the veil to separate man from the Holy of Holies. And the ripping of this veil at the death of Christ graphically symbolizes our new relationship with God through Christ.

Before sin entered the world, man could communicate with God face to face. Adam and Eve walked and talked together with God in the Garden of Eden, and there were no barriers and was no need to hide. After Adam and Eve sinned, however, they immediately hid themselves from God's presence, both literally and through the covering of fig leaves. Sin always brings separation from God and disrupts our communion with Him. A sinful human cannot stand before the presence of the almighty, holy, just, majestic God and not die.

This gaping void between man

and God translated into a veil before the mercy seat of God. In Exodus 26:31-35, God gave instructions to Moses about the veil to be put in the Tabernacle before the Holy of Holies. The veil was beautiful, an object of precious color and fine embroidery and weaving. Yet, the message was clear: Your sin has built a separation between us. Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, could the high priest step over that void and approach the mercy seat. He had to follow strict ceremonial procedures and offer up sacrifices both for his sin and the sins of the people—before he ever attempted to cross that threshold. If he did not follow the instructions perfectly, he would die, so serious was sin.

Thanks be to God, Jesus Christ entered the picture! Christ, our Prophet, Priest, and King, laid down His life for us. He offered up His own flesh and blood as the final, perfect sacrifice for sin. No more animal sacrifices would be necessary for us to enter into God's presence. No more Days of Atonement where only the high priest could enter into the Holy of Holies. Our High Priest went in before us, and now we who are Christians may enter freely into God's presence, for we are covered with Christ's blood and righteousness.

However, this is not the whole picture, because the door swings both ways. Even though Christ restored our relationship with the Father, our sinful nature still rejects communion with God. We sometimes do everything we can to run away from God, either because we delight in our sin or because we think God's grace and forgiveness are not enough for us. The Holy Spirit works to call and woo us to Himself, but

you can still close the door of your heart to Him.

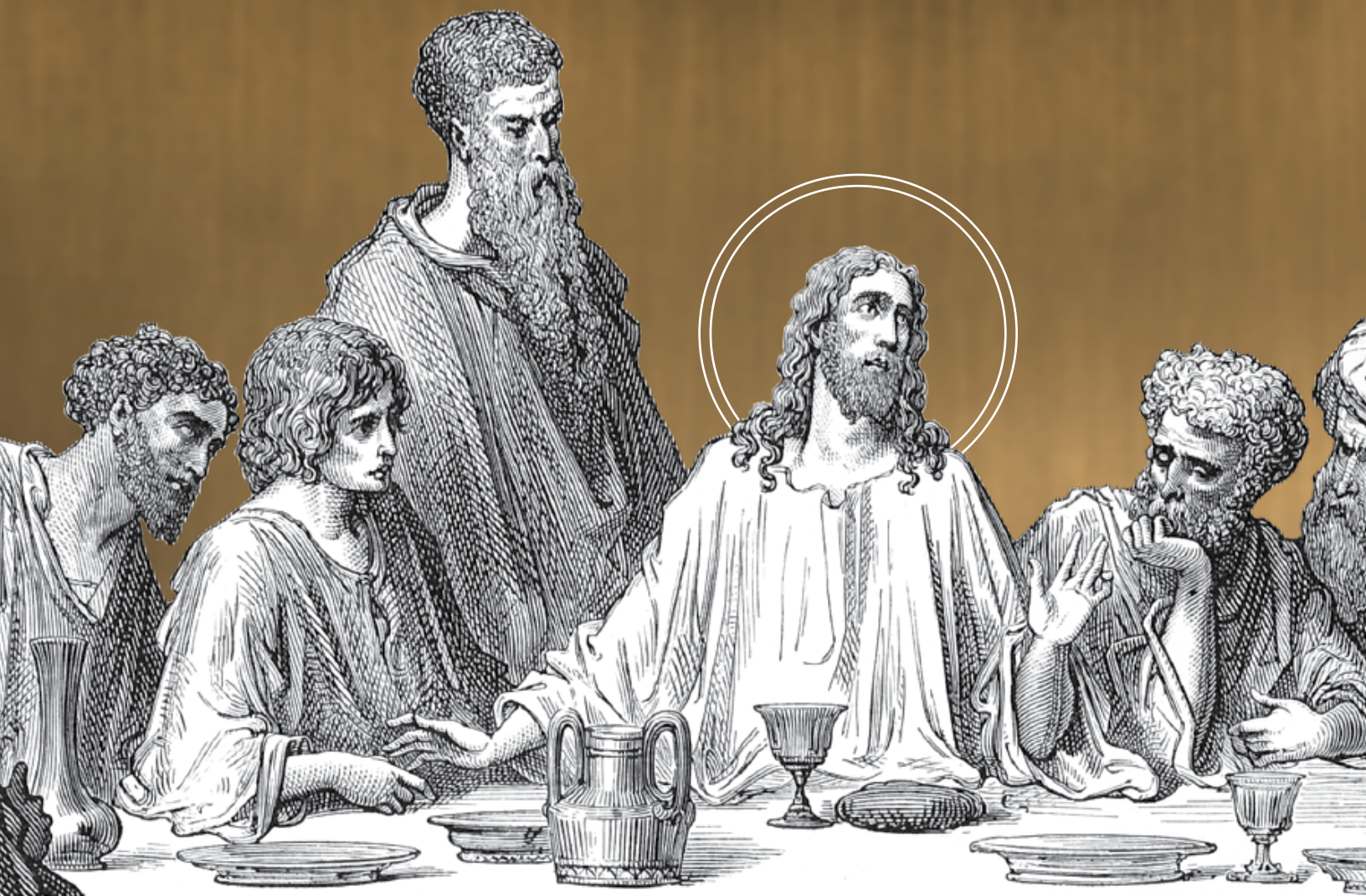
Are you re-tacking up the veil Jesus tore down? Hebrews 4:14 and 16 state: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God ... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Jesus reconciled us to His Father, and now our access to Him is always open and available. I can go to Him "boldly" with every problem, request, heartache, and sin, and God hears my prayers, forgives my sin, and accepts my presence.

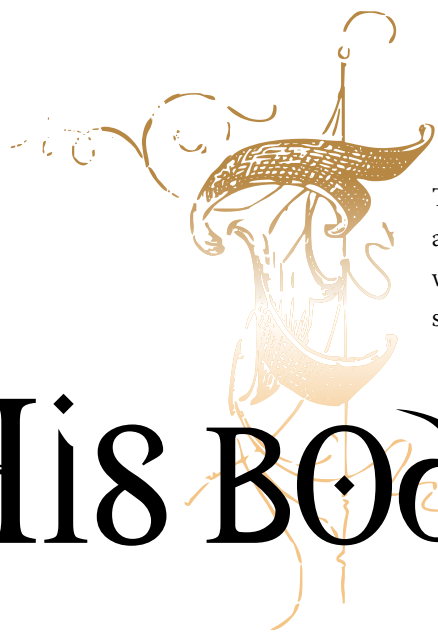
Since we could not restore our relationship with God, He graciously came down and did it for us. This is why the torn veil was such a significant event, recorded in three of the four Gospels. It not only represented God's new open-door policy, whereby He restored our communion and fellowship with Him, it also stands as a beautiful symbol of God calling us earnestly to Himself.

As you dwell on this glorious truth this Easter, take the words of Hebrews 10:19-22 to heart: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Ballmann is a member of Word of Truth Lutheran, Glen Rose, Texas.

*"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover
with you before I suffer." Luke 22:15*





THE PASSOVER WAS SO NAMED IN EXODUS 12 TO COMMEMORATE THE angel of death who passed over the homes of the Hebrews whose doors were marked with lambs' blood. The sign marked in blood brought them freedom from slavery. The same kind of sign has set us free from the bondage of sin.

HIS BODY, HIS BLOOD

BY PASTOR GERALD PETERSON

When the Hebrews slaughtered the lamb, they would place a basin in the threshold or ditch at the foot of the door to catch the blood. Then, with the use of hyssop, like a brush, they would mark the lintel (top of the door frame) followed by the doorposts. The motions made the sign of a bloody cross.

For several years, my church has offered a Seder meal prior to our Maundy Thursday service with Holy Communion. Seder means "order of service," which is used to commemorate the Passover. It places the words of institution in context, providing greater meaning to what Jesus meant when He said, "This is My body," and, "This cup ... is the new covenant in My blood."

It is Luke who gives us a snapshot of the Seder meal.

"And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.' And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood'" (Luke 22:17-20, NASB).

Notice that there is a cup, followed by the bread, and then another cup. The Seder

meal has four cups as a symbol of joy. Luke's account includes the first and third cups, which were believed to be the most important. The first cup, called the cup of sanctification, consecrates the whole meal.

Ceil and Moishe Rosen, in *Christ in the Passover*, write, "The Mishnah states that the third cup was the most significant of all. The third cup had two names: the 'cup of blessing,' because it came after the blessing or grace after meals, and the 'cup of redemption,' because it represented the blood of the Paschal lamb. It was of this cup that Jesus said, 'This is my blood of the new testament [covenant]' (Matthew 26:28). It is this cup of blessing that Paul mentions in I Corinthians 10:16: 'This cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?'"

The modern day Seder meal uses matzo, unleavened bread. Almost always, leaven (yeast) is a symbol of sin. Matzo is cracker-like, with perforations to prevent excessive bubbling of the dough and, while baking, causes uneven browning, producing a striped appearance. The striped and pierced matzo brings to mind, "with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5, KJV) and, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10).

Three matzos are stacked on the Seder plate, which is said to be a symbol of the eternal unity of God. They suggest the

Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. During the meal, the leader singles out the middle matzo and breaks it in half. One half is returned to the stack, while the other half is wrapped and hidden as the *afikomen*, which means "after dish." After the meal, the hidden *afikomen* is unwrapped and a small piece is given to everyone. All partake of it in reverence. It was of the *afikomen* that Jesus said, "This is My body which is given for you." This middle matzo is the Son (Jesus), whose body was broken (crucified), wrapped in white linen, hidden (buried), and found (resurrection), to be partaken by all.

How rich are the parallels between the Seder and our Communion. As we partake of this meal, given by the Lord Jesus Christ, we share personally in the fulfillment of God's plan of full redemption. In the broken *afikomen* we see our Savior's body crucified for our sin. As Jesus raised the cup of redemption, He said, "This is My blood shed for you and for many (all) for the remission of sins."

The invitation, as Rosen writes, is for all: "God has prepared a feast of redemption and joy to which all are invited. The invitation is for us to come and partake of Jesus, the bread of life, the Lamb of God, the Mediator who has taken our judgment upon Himself."

Peterson serves First Lutheran, Oklahoma City, Okla.



PARDON FOR sin

BY KERMIT NASH



SCRIPTURE WAS NEVER INTENDED TO BE A LEGAL TREATISE. INSTEAD, with carefully selected details about Christ's trials, Scripture reveals how even the legal construct preceding Christ's crucifixion demonstrates His character and the fulfillment of God's purposes.

From the onset it is difficult to appreciate the full impact of Jesus' trials. The moment Judas agreed to deliver Christ to the Chief Priests for 30 pieces of silver, a complicated, multi-court legal process had begun. What would follow would be, at the very least, four distinct trials of Christ, none of which legally should have led to His death.

The Legal Environment

After years of irritation, Judea was finally defeated by Pompey in 63 B.C. and made a province. One of the Roman successes was a governance model that allowed an acceptable level of self-rule among conquered states as opposed to complete domination. So long as local autonomy didn't offend the sovereignty and rights of Rome and its' citizens, provinces maintained their local independence by governing themselves and preserving their own form of government. The Roman governors of these provinces administered not only the Roman law that extended over the entire empire, but also the local law preceding Roman rule (*Lex Provinciae*).

In Judea power was coordinated through the Sanhedrin. This body consisted of 71 Chief Priests who held all the power of government (legislative, executive and judicial). Taking all liberties afforded under *Lex*

Provinciae, the Sanhedrin exercised jurisdiction over Jews (and in certain instances non-Jews) in civil and criminal matters and even had its own officers to serve warrants, arrest and carry out its sentences (Matthew 26:47; Acts 4:3). One matter of significance, however, was the controversial limitation on the sentence of death for capital crimes. Only the Roman procurator could ratify a sentence of death.

The Sanhedrin Trial

The Sanhedrin was satisfied, not unlike a grand jury, that the teachings and actions of Jesus constituted a crime, punishable by death by stoning under Mosaic Law. Blasphemy was a crime against Jehovah himself, which could result in a sentence of death. Scripture reveals that, oddly enough, the Chief Priests were trying to obtain false testimony against Christ (Matthew 26:59). While we know very little of the procedure that the Chief Priests used, even the most basic of courts have one universal maxim of justice: *charges must be true*. The Sanhedrin had a legal process, and there is no question in Scripture that the Chief Priests deviated from their normal procedure. Why the Chief Priests didn't decide amongst themselves that it was enough that Christ assumed the role of the Messiah speaks volumes about their dilemma: *they couldn't*

prove that Jesus wasn't the Messiah. This is particularly difficult to accept since the Chief Priests were the advocates, the judges and the jury in this case.

Undaunted by the truth, the Chief Priests bound Christ as a man guilty of a crime and waited until sunrise to deliver Him to Pontius Pilate. Rome had stripped their legal powers to take the life of even a guilty man, therefore the Sanhedrin was forced to conclude their trial of Christ and move to the secular Roman court in hopes of having a sentence of death carried out by Rome. (This didn't necessarily stop mob executions as in the case of Stephen in the Book of Acts where the Chief Priests were "nearby.")

The Roman Trial

Gaining numbers on the way, the Chief Priests delivered Jesus to the Roman officials. In a public setting intended to be a spectacle, the Chief Priests challenged Pilate's request of a charge for the accused by stating, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to you."

Their intentions were clear.

Pilate, not taking the bait, sent the matter back to the Jews by stating, "Take him, and judge him according to your law."

PARDON, continued on page 16

JESUS CHRIST WITH YOU



 BY FAYLIN MYHRE

IT'S EARLY MORNING. THE HORIZON IS TINTED PINK, SOON THE SUN WILL rise. It's a new day, a new week, but in the hearts of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary there is only darkness, grief, pain, sadness and confusion. Heavy hearts and heavy feet shuffle along the dusty path, one step then the next. They are headed toward His grave.

It wasn't supposed to end like this. He promised eternal life yet now He is dead. His broken body lies behind a massive stone. They've come with the spices for his body. They need to enter the tomb. They need to offer this one last loving act of service. How will they move the stone? Why, why did He have to die? What will they do now? How will life ever be normal again? So many questions ...

"Up ahead," one says to the other, "that's where they laid His body, in Joseph's tomb."

But something doesn't look right. The stone has already been moved! Who? How? Why? Still more questions.

There is a man there, no ordinary man if he is the one who moved the stone! The guards at the tomb were so afraid they became like dead men. It's not a man, but an angel of the Lord. The grief and pain make room for fear.

"Do not be afraid," he says.

Yeah, right!

Then he tells them the unbelievable. Jesus is not in the tomb.

"He has risen from the dead, *just as he said.*"

Dare they believe it? The angel shows them the *empty* tomb and tells them they will soon see Him. Now fear and confusion are overtaken by hope!

The feet once heavy as they traveled

up the path now take them quickly back the way they came—as fast as they can go without stumbling on the rocks. They need to find the others and tell them what they've heard and seen and experienced! Could it be true? Is He alive? Will anyone believe them? Where is He if He's not in the tomb? Again questions ...

Yes, they must find the others and tell them the good news.

Then, on the path before them, He is there. Jesus is there, alive and whole coming toward them. His gentle eyes meet theirs and their hearts soar. His radiant face breaks into a smile and their questions and confusion are gone. They hear His voice speak their names and they fall at His feet in worship. They don't know the how or the why but they know the Who.

In this life we often walk a path full of despair, grief and confusion. Perhaps you've walked toward a grave and a casket with a loved one who is gone from this life too soon. Perhaps you've learned that your illness is terminal and the walk back out to the car in the parking lot is the longest you have ever taken. Maybe someone you love just said they don't love you anymore, and you don't know if you can even walk much less where you can go.

The world is an unstable place. There are things to fear on every side. We have so

many questions. But we take the next step and then another and another. Something in us brings life to hope, hope for strength today, hope for a better day tomorrow, hope for a miracle.

Then there He is waiting for us, coming to greet us. His eyes meet ours. His heart, so full of love for us, speaks to ours. Perhaps He has been here the whole time but our hearts were too full of pain to see Him.

But now we see Him. He brings us a miracle. Maybe not what we think we want. Our loved one remains in the grave, our illness is still terminal and we still don't understand the why. But we know the Who. We have Jesus. He meets us and greets us. He walks with us and sometimes He carries us.

Jesus knew the heaviness in the women's hearts that morning. He knew their questions. He knows the heaviness in your heart right now. He knows your questions. He let them find the tomb empty, giving birth to hope. He died on the cross that Friday, stayed in the tomb on Saturday, but Sunday morning He had conquered death and the grave. Jesus meets us and greets us, giving birth to hope. He is here. Jesus is the Answer.

Myhre, the Women's Outreach Coordinator for the WME, is a member of Bethany Free Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D.





"ON THAT FIRST EASTER, RUMORS AND IMPOSSIBLE STORIES HAD BEGUN TO circulate. Some said Jesus was alive, others reported that angels were at the tomb and told them Jesus would soon meet His disciples. Even Peter and John had some kind of story that the huge stone was not in front of the tomb and the tomb was empty.

"All of the disciples wanted to believe that a miracle had taken place and that Jesus was alive, but of course they knew it could not be true. The disciples may not have been the most educated men, but they were nobody's fools. They knew death, and Jesus was definitely dead. Dead men don't just get up by themselves from the grave, especially men who were brutalized by scourging and crucifixion. Yes, they were eyewitnesses of His many miracles. They watched as Jesus raised the widow's son and Lazarus. But this was different. Who could raise Jesus?

"Light was fading upon the Judean hillside, but the darkness outside was not nearly as terrible as the darkness in the hearts and minds of the disciples. The doors were locked and the shutters over the windows were secured 'for fear of the Jews.' Why shouldn't they be afraid? If the priests and Pharisees could falsely accuse and kill Jesus, what would stop them from finding His disciples and killing them?

"Ten men were hiding in a locked room, terrified and confused, when the One who was dead stood in front of them. How

could this be? Was this a vision or a ghost? After all, the doors were bolted shut. Jesus spoke before they could scream. His words were so typical: 'Peace be with you.'

"He was always saying something like that, always in control of everything. The strength and calmness in that voice was unlike any other. No one else could imitate Jesus. When He said things would be okay, they simply were.

"A ghost? No, He showed them His hands and feet, no longer covered in blood, but the wounds were clearly visible where the nails had been driven, securing Jesus to the cross. Yes, this man who stood in front of them now said it again: 'Peace with you!'

"Staring at the deep wounds had made their stomachs wretch and the fear rise again. How they needed to hear Him say that phrase once more."

The pastor told the Easter story with passion in his voice. For him the story was true. Jesus had died on the cross to pay the awful debt of our sins, and on the third day was raised to life—bursting on the scene,

HIS PEACE BE

BY PASTOR TIM SKRAMSTAD

frightening Roman soldiers, and convincing His followers of the reality of His resurrection.

As the pastor looked over the congregation, a slight smile crossed his face. He was encouraged to see families who had broken his heart by their long absence, children and grandchildren of some of the older members, and visitors who were here for the first time.

The organist and pianist were now joined by a trumpet to play, "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." The fragrant Easter lilies filled the entire area near the altar. Everything seemed just right. Why, then, was there an oppressive cloud of darkness hanging over the congregation? The pastor knew this same darkness from so many other churches, and a flood of memories came together in this one service.

Even the most inspiring messages on Christ's resurrection can seem empty to the one who has the shroud of death around her heart. Her marriage of more than 50 years shattered in a moment. Another pew held the children of a soldier killed by a terrorist. In the back was the young couple who had just suffered their third miscarriage. Death was everywhere and more seemed on the way.

The light streaming through the stained glass did not do much to dispel the shadows

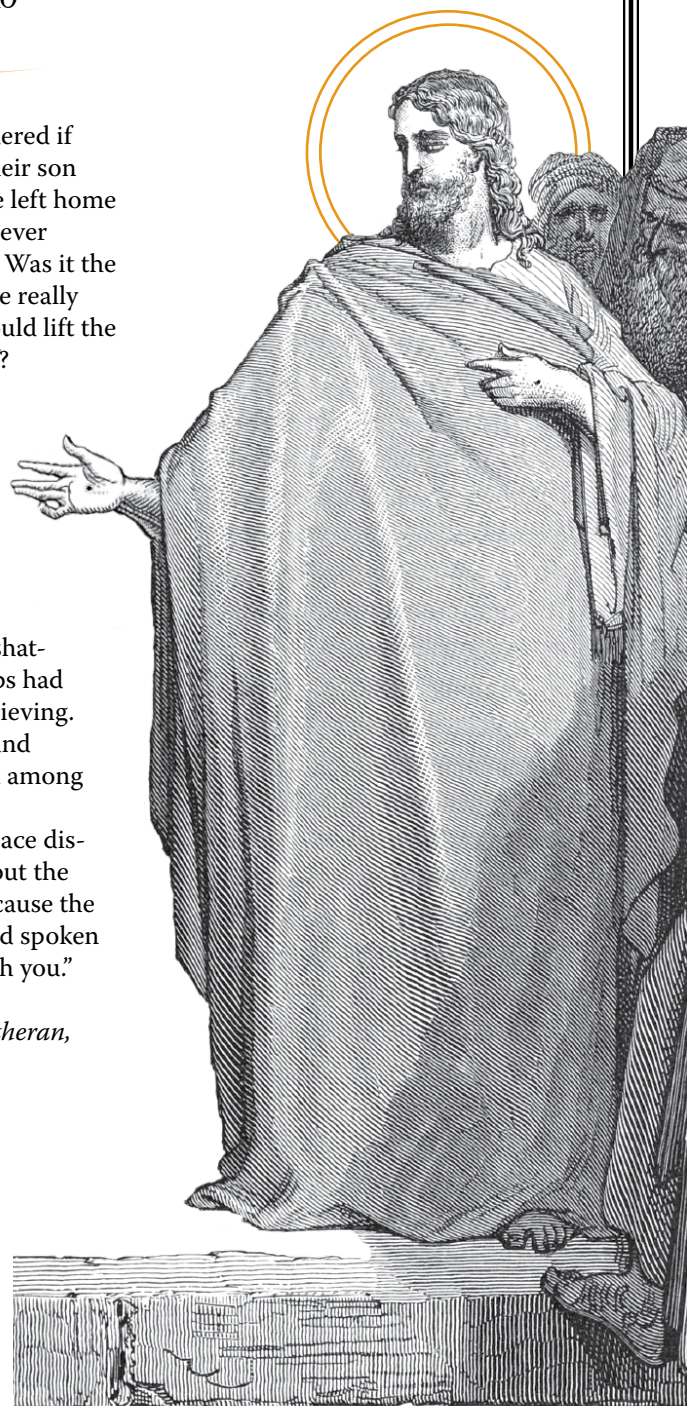
of sorrow and fear. A family wondered if God really does answer prayer. Their son seemed so far away this Easter. He left home in a rage. Cursing and threats of never returning lingered in their minds. Was it the drugs and alcohol talking or did he really hate God and his family? Who would lift the stone from the grave of their grief?

Then He came into their midst. Hideous sorrow met outrageous joy. He was seen, not so much because of the sermon or even by the beautiful music. He came in His own peculiar way with the words: "Peace be with you!"

The healer of broken hearts, shattered lives, and messy relationships had found His way to sit among the grieving. He came with the same strength and confidence as in that locked room among confused disciples.

Some might wonder at the peace discovered on that Easter morning, but the healing of souls had begun, all because the Savior had risen from the dead and spoken those simple words, "Peace be with you."

Skramstad serves Living Word Lutheran, Eagan, Minn.



WITH YOU



BY FAYLIN MYHRE

THE LOVE SONG



The rain falls gently on my roof,
Slow dancing to a love song.
Suddenly, it becomes a frenzied, passionate
tribal dance.

The droplets join together in a rivulet
Racing to the edge of the roof.
They freefall to find their purpose;
Bathing leaves and grass and stone,
Quenching the dry and thirsty ground,
Bringing hope, bringing life, bringing
renewal.

More drops, red this time;
A mixture of blood and sweat, agony and
prayer,
Slowly falling on His clothes, the stones,
the ground.
They too are passionate, but not frenzied;
purposeful.
Soon a stream is flowing from His wounds,
His life blood pooling in a fountain.
The weary sin-stained soul comes,
Longing for rest, for peace, for renewal,
Finding hope, finding life, finding Christ,
The Love Song of the Ages.

Firmly convinced, Firmly planted

BY BRETT BOE



Free Lutheran Youth Convention • July 6-11 • Estes Park, Colo.

One of the things that encourages and refreshes my heart each year I celebrate Easter is the reaction of Jesus' followers to His resurrection. The death of Jesus on the cross was no doubt a devastating blow that left them with no hope. They had poured their whole lives into walking with Jesus, and now, it seemed, they had nothing to show for it.

In the first few verses of Matthew 28, you can sense the crushed spirits of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary as they went to the tomb of Jesus. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled away the stone from the grave. The angel encouraged them to not be afraid and announced to them that Jesus had arisen. Then, in verse 8, Matthew writes, "They left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples."

Their initial response to the news that Jesus had arisen informs us that joy had flooded into these hearts that were empty of hope and crushed in spirit. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were firmly convinced that Jesus had risen from the dead. That truth fueled their joy and excitement. How could they keep it to themselves? The disciples must be told! As they were on their way, Jesus Himself appeared to them. The two women took hold of Jesus' feet and worshipped Him. He, also, encouraged them to not be afraid.

As I think through this account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I am reminded of the work God has accomplished at past FLY Conventions. Many people have come to the FLY Conventions hopeless and joyless. But they met Jesus Christ face to face there, and these hopeless and joyless students have had their eyes opened to their sinfulness. The conviction of the Holy Spirit "pierced them to the heart" (Acts 2:37). The gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed to these students, and the good news was received by faith. The thrill, joy, and excitement that flooded the



two Marys at Christ's resurrection has filled these students.

As I have attended the past few FLY Conventions, I have witnessed firsthand this same Easter excitement flood the souls of students who have been saved by God. It is precisely this same Easter excitement that keeps me involved, even past my high school days, in insuring the FLY Convention continues to be an event that proclaims the powerful gospel of the resurrected Christ.

Members of the FLY Committee have been planning and praying for this upcoming FLY Convention for almost two years. It has been our prayer that God work in the lives of all who attend. You may have already sent us your registrations, hosted many fundraisers, and made travel plans to come to the FLY Convention July 6-11. We all look forward to the joy, excitement and hope that is sure to fill our students at the convention, helping them become firmly convinced and firmly planted.

Boe, who serves as treasurer for the FLY Committee, is currently a student at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Raising the stakes, the Chief Priests stated, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”

It isn’t known whether Pilate fully understood the charges against Jesus at this time, but the rebuttal by the Chief Priests categorized the crime for Pilate, and his formal interrogation would soon begin.

In Jesus’ case, the charge of blasphemy was cast aside as He was charged with high treason against Rome, a secular offense, also punishable by death. Among the claims preserved in Scripture were the accusations that Jesus was “perverting the nation,” “forbidding to give tribute to Caesar” and “claiming to be Christ, the King.” This concoction of claims led to the generalization that Jesus claimed to be king, a claim that even Pilate couldn’t ignore.

The account of kingship was irreconcilable with Roman law, and while Pilate was not obligated to enforce the law or punish Christ, it isn’t clear if Pilate went through the established procedure for a Roman trial. There was no panel of judges, there was no prosecutor, there was no defense of the witness, there was no formal evidence, all of which were typical in a Roman period trial. The biblical account doesn’t mention the particular steps, but peculiarities notwithstanding, it was without question a trial and certainly not a rubber stamp of the Sanhedrin’s trial.

When Pilate commenced his questioning of Jesus, he discarded the first two charges, moving to the most serious of the three. Jesus responded to Pilate’s questions, unrepresented, unrepentant and artful. After questioning, Pilate pronounced a verdict of acquittal by stating, “I find no fault in him.”

No conviction, no sentence, no punishment. This response was the pinnacle of disappointment for the Chief Priests. Immediately, new charges were brought to Pilate. Looking for a way out, he invoked a procedural maneuver to get this problem out of his court and into another jurisdiction. With cunning, Pilate asked if Jesus was from Galilee. The crowd answered in the affirmative. “Yes” is all Pilate needed to invoke the removal of Christ to Herod’s court.

Herodian Trial

Because it was the Passover, Herod the Tetrarch of Galilee was in Jerusalem. Roman guards took Jesus a few short blocks to Herod Antipas, the same Herod who had Jesus’ cousin John the Baptist, beheaded, a thought which certainly had to be on Christ’s mind.

Little evidence remains historically of what a Galilean trial would have entailed. What we do know is that Herod took center stage by commencing the examination of Jesus himself. Despite Herod’s questioning, Jesus remained silent.

Why would Jesus—God incarnate, without sin—not answer the questions presented by Herod after strategically answering the questions in Pilate’s court? Jesus may have known that Herod had jurisdiction over the region where He had spent much of his adult life. But in Jerusalem, where the claims against Jesus had given rise, Herod was outside of his authority. Perhaps it was a judgment of Herod that made Him choose not to dignify his questions with a response.

Vanquished by a silent defendant from Nazareth, Herod mocked Jesus by adorning him in a robe and sending Him back to Pilate. No conviction, no sentence, no legal punishment.

Roman Second Trial

Upon receiving Jesus again, Pilate, armed with a spurious conviction by the High Priests, a “no-fault” from himself and a “non-conviction” from Herod, again stated his conclusion to the crowd that there was no viable charge against Jesus, not to mention one that merited a sentence of death. Sensing the pressure, Pilate offered to have Jesus scourged and then released. This offer was rejected. The typical response of a Roman court to a charge of “not guilty” would be to receive the protection of Rome by placing the accused in prison, where at least he would be safe from the mob. Pilate opted for a tradition of releasing a prisoner during the observance of Passover. Barabbas was the fateful thief who would find his place in history by being the alternative to Christ for the Passover release.

As if hanging on to a reason to not crucify Jesus, Pilate took Jesus away and began to question Him. This time, Jesus was quiet.

Pilate, under great pressure from the mob’s demands for Jesus’ death, said to the crowd, “Shall I crucify your king?”

The response of the crowd was nothing short of a profound, “We have no king but Caesar,” which was the furthest collective truth amongst the Judeans. Instead, it speaks volumes about the unity of their desire for Jesus’ fate.

Not to be outdone, Pilate’s conclusion that Jesus was still without guilt received the cleverest response of the day: “If you let this man go, you are not Caesar’s friend: whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.”

The crowd not only made the case against Jesus, but in one solitary measure correlated the crime of claiming to be king with the crime of not convicting Him—each punishable by death. This threat by the Jews, which would amount to tattling to Caesar if Pilate didn’t punish Christ, was more than Pilate could handle. As we all know, Pilate performed a cleansing ritual to absolve himself of any wrongdoing for what was surely Christ’s death sentence. By washing his hands in a basin of water, he declared his innocence and turned Christ over to the Jews, but with the assistance of his soldiers, Christ’s executioners.

Conclusion

The trials of Jesus weren’t without problems: lack of procedure, lack of true evidence, irregularities and a “quick and speedy trial,” which was the opposite of the norm for a capital crime under Jewish and Roman law. Regardless of the problems and raw injustice of the trials of Christ, His pre-eminence and innocence prevailed. No human court could convict Him, no human evidence merited even a charge. Christ had to bear the sin of mankind, be a judge Himself, and commit Himself to death as a voluntary sacrifice. True, men ran Christ through a circus of procedure to get Him to the cross. But the victory in Christ’s resurrection was not a vindication of His sentence but a victory over sin and death. Death which no man and no court could tie to Christ.

Nash, a practicing attorney, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.



*The process, the
cross, fulfilled
His purpose,
that all men
be saved*

His one purpose



BY PASTOR JIM FUGLEBERG

John 12:23-32

Thunder pealed through the air—or so some thought. Others weren't so sure and thought they had heard the voice of God.

Incredibly, it happened right after a prayer, brief but significant. Jesus had said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

Most people would have trouble praying a prayer that involves committing one's self to His course in spite of opposition and hatred, and even death, as His prayer did. But Jesus was thinking much bigger than Himself or just His immediate surroundings. He was thinking of the many people who could benefit if only He would follow through on what He knew would be needed, difficult though it would be.

Perhaps nearby was the wheat that served to illustrate the course He knew was necessary. A seed planted produces a harvest of many new seeds, even though it must die in the process.

That was the hard part. But with the purpose of the harvest in His heart, Jesus was preparing for the process which, He was certain, would and must come upon Him. He spoke of the *process* in words that to our ears hardly sound like death at all. His term was "this hour." But He spoke of the *purpose* in words staggering

in scope. His words were these: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

"All men" was the purpose. "All men" was the scope of His words. All men were in His heart, and therefore He was willing to proceed with the process of being "lifted up."

Jesus was under no illusions. Being lifted up did not mean on a platform of popularity or on a throne of majesty. It meant on a cross of agony. But because He cares for all men, He willingly went the way of the wheat and was lifted up in hope of the harvest.

The harvest is the heart of missions, and the harvest is in our hands. The scope is staggering, because all men need what was done on the cross, and the sacrifice made there is sufficient for all. And so we pray, and so we give, and so we send, and so we go. To Africa and Asia, to Europe and South America, missionaries announce the news of a sacrifice complete, of a way that is open, of a risen Savior who draws all men to Himself. Across the millions not one is excluded, nor ought any be denied the message. Therefore may we be faithful to Him who was lifted up, until all men have heard.

Fugleberg, who serves St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., is a member of the AFLC's World Missions Committee.

Bible school seeks new women's resident head

The Association Free Lutheran Bible School is seeking a spiritually mature Women's Resident Head in the women's dorm. A job description and application form is posted at our Web site (www.aflbs.org). Interested applicants should send application and resume to AFLBS Dean, Pastor Joel Rolf, 3134 East Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441, or call (763) 544-9501 for more information.

Upcoming retreats at ARC highlighted

Women's Retreat

March 27-29

Cost: \$85

Speaker is Faylin Myhre with the theme, "Pearls for a Princess."

A silent auction is planned for Saturday afternoon. Bring an item to auction (new, antique, crafts or home-made) and enjoy the afternoon shopping for treasures. Proceeds will be used by the ARC for building/general expenses.

Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. March 27 and the weekend events end with a worship service on March 29.

Men's Retreat

April 24-25

Cost: \$65

Speaker is Brian Ricke, a student at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The retreat will begin 7 p.m. Friday and ends Saturday evening after dinner. Stay Saturday night and have breakfast on Sunday morning for an additional \$20.

Some recreational activities will include basketball, golf, volleyball, horse-shoes, trapshooting and archery.

A \$25 deposit is required with registration for ARC retreats. Bring a friend who is new to the ARC and receive 10 percent off your registration. Please register at least 10 days prior to the retreat to avoid a late fee of \$20. For more information on these events, visit the ARC's Web site at www.arc_aflc.org, or call (800) 294-2877.

Annual Conference housing options

Plans are under way at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., for the AFLC Annual Conference, scheduled for June 16-19. Below you will find the housing availability list so you can get your reservations in early. The conference registration information will be published again in the May issue of the *Lutheran Ambassador*, and is also available online at www.aflc.org (click on "conferences").

Hotels

Best Western*

800-293-2216
\$75.99/double,
\$69.99/single,
\$99.99/suites

AmericInn

866-736-5452
\$79.90/standard,
\$99.90/suite

Comfort Inn

218-736-5787
\$89.99/standard

Days Inn

218-739-3311
\$90.99/double,
\$70.99/single

Super 8

218-739-3261

Resorts

WesLake Resort

Underwood, Minn.
13 cabins/ no camping
800-258-9056
218-826-6523
www.weslakeresort.com

Swan Lake Resort

Fergus Falls, Minn.
5 cabins/camping available
800-697-4626
218-736-4626
www.swanlkresort.com

Ten Mile Lake Resort

Dalton, Minn.
12 cabins/camping available
218-589-8845
www.tenmilelakeresort.com
schultz@prtcl.com

Bed & Breakfasts

Bakketopp Hus

Fergus Falls, Minn.
218-739-2915
ddn@prtcl.com

Prairie View Estates

Pelican Rapids, Minn.
218-863-4321
prairie@prtcl.com

Loghouse B&B

Vergas, Minn.
218-342-2318
www.loghousebb.com
loghouse@tekstar.com

* Site of the AFLC Annual Conference June 16-19

Programs for childcare, VBS and youth

The annual conference planning committee at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., has provided several options for children and youths throughout the week of June 16-19.

Nursery options

A nursery will be available for children aged 4 years and younger from 9 a.m. to noon, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. and 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday (with the exception of evening nursery on Friday). The committee is asking parents to fill out a registration form, which will provide caretakers with names, genders, ages of children as well as health issues if applicable. A registration form can be found on the AFLC's Web site at www.aflc.org (click on "conferences").

Young adult activities

Young adults with special needs, aged 16-25, will be given an opportunity to serve the conference as well as participate in recreational events each afternoon during the conference from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. The conference planning committee is asking parents of young adults with special needs to register for these events by providing their child's name, age, capabilities, likes

and dislikes as well as explaining their child's special needs. A registration form can be found at www.aflc.org.

Youth activities

Daily outreach events, Bible studies and recreational activities are planned for youths in grades 6-12, beginning Wednesday, June 17. Morning outreach events will include serving as nursery helpers, as well as participating in a canned food drive and volunteering with Kids Against Hunger. Afternoon recreational activities will include field trips to Thumper Pond Waterpark, Northern Aire Lanes bowling, and the YMCA. A registration form, which includes the cost of the recreational activities, is available at www.aflc.org.

Vacation Bible school

Vacation Bible school will be offered to children ages 5-10, from 9 a.m. to noon, and a day camp from 1:30 to 4 p.m. June 17-19 at Calvary Free Lutheran. Activities are currently being planned. Fees for the activities will be collected during conference registration, which will be used to offset the cost of the activities. For more information, visit www.aflc.org.

conference

REGISTRATION

June 16-19 in Fergus Falls, Minn.

Host: Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn.

Conference site: Bigwood Event Center, 925 Western Ave., Fergus Falls, Minn.

For a downloadable form, and for more information, visit www.aflc.org and click on “conferences”

First name: _____ Spouse's first name: _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Congregation: _____

(Circle) You are: Pastor Visiting Pastor Lay Member Lay Visitor
Your spouse is: Pastor Visiting Pastor Lay Member Lay Visitor

Name of person attending WMF Convention on June 16: _____

(Note: If you have children attending, please see childcare information printed on page 18.)

Meals: Breakfast and evening dinners are on your own, except as noted. A general lunch will be available at noon on site.

Special meals and banquets

Tuesday Conference Committee lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Tuesday WMF luncheon	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Tuesday WMF banquet	_____ X \$15	\$ _____
Wednesday WMF advisory board breakfast	_____ X \$10	\$ _____
Wednesday general lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Wednesday Builder's Fellowship lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Wednesday Schools Corporation dinner	_____ X \$20	\$ _____
Thursday Mission Corporation breakfast	_____ X \$10	\$ _____
Thursday general lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Thursday ARC Corporation lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____
Thursday Pastors and Wives banquet	_____ X \$20	\$ _____
Friday FLAPS breakfast	_____ X \$10	\$ _____
Friday general lunch	_____ X \$11	\$ _____

Total lunches/special meals \$ _____

Conference registration fee (\$30 single/\$40 couple) \$ _____

WMF Convention registration fee (\$7) \$ _____

Total registration and meals \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Calvary Free Lutheran
Mail to: Calvary Free Lutheran, Attn.: AFLC Conference Committee,
1416 County Hwy 111, Fergus Falls, MN 56537



Sacrificial giving

BY LOIS GROTHE

What a whirlwind since I was elected treasurer of the national Women's Missionary Federation in June. I love getting mail. Thanks to the generous donations of ladies in local WMF's across the nation, I get plenty. Lynn Wellumson, who served as treasurer before me, must be chuckling right now. The gifts I see given for support of our federation's goals appear to me as a representation of prayerful, thoughtful, and yes, sacrificial giving.

We have several missionary families in the field who are depending on members of AFLC churches for their support. The WMF women also support the work of our Home Missions department, as they plant churches in towns across America and reach out to the many villages in Alaska. Gifts from WMF women also benefit our AFLC Bible school and seminary, where young people come to study God's Word and learn to use it in their everyday lives. Another area we support is Parish Education. Monies given to the Parish Education department are used to print Sunday school materials and books written by AFLC members, pastors, teachers and missionaries. A recent example is *Missionary Chronicles*, a compilation of stories written by missionaries who have served with or have ties to the AFLC. These are all areas that depend on the financial and prayer support of others.

We are in a time when we are reflecting on Christ's sacrifice for our sins. During this time I would urge you to consider these areas we support and prayerfully ask God where and how He wants you to respond to His wonderful gift of salvation. Pray about giving for these needs outlined above.

Grothe, who serves as the treasurer of the national WMF, is a member of Bethany Lutheran, Astoria, Ore.

Note: All gifts given by the women of the WMF should be sent to Lois Grothe, 3745 Franklin Ave., Astoria, OR 97103. Please use the transmittal form provided in the Resource Packet to let her know to which ministry to apply your gifts. Thank you!

Register now for the WMF convention

*June 16, 2009
Bigwood Event Center
Fergus Falls, Minn.*

The national Women's Missionary Federation is excited to invite you to WMF day at the AFLC Annual Conference. We will meet together beginning at 9 a.m. June 16 at the Bigwood Event Center, located at the Best Western, 925 Western Ave., Fergus Falls, Minn.

We are very excited to offer studies based on the theme, "WMF—Using our gifts," with a focus on Romans 12:6a, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them." Please join us as we study God's Word, fellowship and discuss topics ranging from discovering your gifts to using a specific gift to minister and witness to others.

Please use the AFLC registration form (page 19) to register for the WMF convention, luncheon and banquet on June 16. The WMF leadership breakfast on the morning of June 17 is open to anyone who is interested in women's ministries. See you there.

Members of Sverdrup Society meet on Medicine Lake campus



Members of the Georg Sverdrup Society met on Jan. 30 at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Plymouth, Minn. The Society hosted a public forum, with three papers on Sverdrup presented throughout the morning sessions. Pastor Andrew Coyle, above left, presented a paper on "Martin Luther: The Father of Modern Missions." Pastor Eugene Enderlein, above right, presented a paper on "Lutheran Pietism: the Mother of Modern Missions." Pastor Martin Horn presented a paper on "Sverdrup and Mission Unity Among Norwegian Lutherans in America."

Trinity Free Lutheran of Janesville, WI, celebrates 20 years

Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis., began in 1989 as an AFLC Home Mission congregation. Pastor Ken Thoreson served as the first pastor. Pastor Curt Emerson then served Trinity for 10 years. Pastor Frank Cherney currently serves the congregation.

On Jan. 18, AFLC President Pastor Elden Nelson and a gospel team from AFLBS joined friends and members for a celebration service and dinner to mark the event. The program included a time of praise and worship and performances by the gospel team and a choral group from Trinity. Pastor Nelson spoke on the theme, "Stop, Look, and Listen." Time was spent in prayer and testimonies were shared on how God has touched lives through Trinity Free Lutheran. Twenty years isn't all that long, but a difference has been made for eternity in the lives God has touched through the congregation. Here are two of the testimonies shared:

"Trinity is my church home. Not the church I was born in, but the church home I spiritually grew up in. It is where I found spiritual food with the pure Word of God as the main ingredient. It is where I learned about having a personal relationship with my Lord and Savior, where I can



Members of Trinity Free Lutheran, Janesville, Wis., celebrated the congregation's 20th anniversary on Jan. 18.

share the gifts God has graciously given me, and where I can enjoy fellowship with brothers and sisters who have the same Heavenly Father," said Sam.

"Trinity is home for me. It's a place where I can know and be known. I don't have to pretend to be someone I'm not, and I don't have to be perfect. Because of our common bond in Christ, the people in my church family love me as I am, and I can share my burdens and joys with them. I look forward to worship each Sunday be-

cause the worship music turns my heart to the Lord and because I know that the Lord will speak to me through the message. I am both challenged and encouraged. I appreciate our connection with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and the stand on the inerrancy [of the Bible]. I have such appreciation for the Bible school. Both of our children have attended and have gotten a strong foundation for life and made close lifelong friends," said Joan.



Speaking the gospel

A group of pastors and Bible women in Chirala, India, recently met for training in preaching, pastoral training and mission outreach. Pastor Kevin Olson, with the Ambassador Institute, along with a group from the AFLC headquarters, presented the training sessions in which students learn to share the gospel message through oral presentations.

Also at the training sessions were Pastor Del Palmer, director of World Missions, Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, Pastor Craig Wentzel, who serves on the World Missions Committee, and Bob Lee, a student at the Free Lutheran Seminary.

People and places

Pastor David Hinrichs has resigned from Elim Lutheran, Clinton, Minn., and Abiding Faith Free Lutheran, Ortonville, Minn., effective the end of June. The Ortonville/Clinton parish is currently in the call process.

Tim Berntson, Valley City, N.D., has resigned from his position on the Coordinating Committee. The committee has appointed **Lowell Watt**, Park River, N.D., to fill that position until the Annual Conference meets in June.

Members of the Coordinating Committee have accepted **Pastor Marlin Harris**, Woodbury, Minn., onto the AFLC fellowship roster pending call from an AFLC congregation. Harris was formerly a member of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck has accepted a call to serve Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn. He will be installed there March 29, with AFLC President Pastor Elden Nelson officiating. Quanbeck previously served Bethel Free Lutheran, Minot, N.D.

Pastor Nathan Minnich was ordained Feb. 22 at Salem Lutheran, Elizabethville, Pa. AFLC President Pastor Elden Nelson officiated. Members of Salem Lutheran recently joined the AFLC.

Pastor Michael Flechsig was installed at Egeland Lutheran, Waubay, S.D., and Ortley Free Lutheran, Ortley, S.D., on Feb. 8. Pastor Richard Gunderson, assistant to the president, officiated. Flechsig was accepted onto the AFLC fellowship roster pending call by an AFLC congregation.

Correction

In the February issue of the *Lutheran Ambassador*, Daniel Giles was incorrectly identified as a part-time missionary assistant. He is a short-term assistant. An explanation of this position will be included in the April issue, which will focus on missions.

AFLC memorials

AFLBS

Dorothy Durkee
Mark Frain
Tom McLoughlin
Myron Rostad
Alice Rokke
Audrey Moan
Joanne Weinkauff
Esther Brekka

AFLTS

Maurice McLoughlin
Marlyn Kruse (2)
Alice Rokke
Tom McLoughlin
Shirley Olson

Home Missions

Martha Holm
Lloyd Haugen
Harold Michelson
Evelyn Aas

Parish Education

Marge Bischoff
Emil Bakke
Hazel Fenner

Vision

Judith Hanson (4)
Bill Lackey
Tom McLoughlin
Shirley Kargel

World Missions

Alfred Haugen

WMF

V.J. Wik
Marian Larson
Justin Keckler
Paulette Porebe
Jeannie Loomis
Orpha Nordheim
Alice Rokke
Annie Ramberg
Kim Patte

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Jan. 31, 2009

FUND	TOTAL (subsidy)	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$434,087	\$27,604	\$27,604	6
Evangelism	112,642	6,096	6,096	5
Youth Ministries	78,909	5,164	5,164	7
Parish Education	135,207	8,004	8,004	6
Seminary	244,110	18,248	18,248	7
Bible School	398,910	30,903	30,903	8
Home Missions	375,908	24,542	24,542	7
World Missions	327,017	18,991	18,991	6
Personal Support	435,500	33,373	33,373	8
TOTALS	\$2,542,290	\$172,926	\$172,926	7
TOTALS 2008	\$2,307,821	\$238,399	\$238,399	10

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.

Being vulnerable

Tears were shed. Men hugged (in a manly way of course). People shared about disappointments and failures, challenges and trials. No, it wasn't some afternoon TV talk show. This all happened at the recent AFLC Pastors Conference.

At some previous pastors conferences



Pastor Craig Johnson

I've met guys and asked them how it was going. They replied with a smile and said, "Fine." Two weeks later a notice comes to the *Ambassador* that they have resigned without a call.

We hear of troubles in the congregation. The pastor didn't feel he could continue on there any longer. He felt he had to leave but he didn't know what he was going to do next.

Problems like that usually don't develop in simply two weeks. The trouble had probably been brewing for quite some time. When the pastor said at conference it was all good, he wasn't telling the whole story.

Why wasn't he? Why did he feel like he had to put on a smile and act like everything was going great? Why wasn't our pastors conference, of all places, a time when he could be real and not put on an act?

Remembering some of those past experiences made the spirit at this year's conference all the more refreshing. Speakers shared scriptural truth, and they

also shared their stories. They told of trials that were too much for them to handle but God helped them to endure and overcome. They were willing to let their failures be known and their imperfections show.

Some of that same kind of honest sharing from the heart was going on during the breaks in between sessions. Along with sharing about joys, guys shared about struggles. We tried to encourage one another and prayed for each other.

It is tempting to worry about what others think. You get afraid of letting others see the real you. You play the part of super spiritual Christian who can leap over tall trials with a single prayer.

Playing that part can get exhausting. Each of us needs time when we are with other Christians whom we trust, with

whom we feel we can open up and be honest. A free and living congregation is to be that kind of place. It is to be a place where a person can come and admit struggles, confess failures, ask for forgiveness and prayer and find love and acceptance.

Vulnerability scares us. A lot of us, myself as much as anyone, would rather be the strong one who is giving help. We get uncomfortable when we have to ask for help.

Shortly before He was arrested, Jesus said to His disciples: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me" (Matthew 26:38, NIV). He honestly expressed His need and His anguish. As

always, He serves as the perfect role model for us.

Last February I got sick one Saturday night. I should have told the congregation on Sunday morning I was too sick to lead the service and preach, but I didn't. I hardly ever get sick. I've never missed a Sunday because I was sick, and I wanted to keep my streak intact. I ended up passing out during the service because of my high fever. My attempt to act like I was strong

Vulnerability scares us. A lot of us, myself as much as anyone, would rather be the strong one who is giving help. We get uncomfortable when we have to ask for help.

resulted in my weakness being seen by everybody. I should have just admitted I had a problem and I was in need.

Admitting weakness and opening our heart to others isn't easy for us to do. But it is necessary if we are going to have real relationships where we are building one another up in Christ. When we are weak, then we are strong (II Corinthians 12:10).

Jesus welcomes us to be honest with Him. He knows our weaknesses better than we do, and still He wants us. With Him we can drop the act. We can be real and know we are still loved. Because we are loved we can have open and honest relationships with one another in free and living congregations.

something to share

His sacred **SCARS**

BY KANDY BAUDER



When my son, Jerrod, was born he received a hand printing kit to capture his tiny fingers' imprint forever in a plaster mold. I was hesitant to use it because as a nurse in the PICU this was a procedure we did for parents when they lost a small child to injury or illness.

When Jerrod was 2 months old my husband convinced me to use the kit. We decided to put his hand in part of the plaster and his big brother Aaron's hand in part of the mold. My husband wrote the date and initials under each hand print. After the plaster dried, we carefully colored them with the chalk from the kit. When it was finished, it became one of my most treasured possessions. I placed it on a shelf, resting it on a small easel. I knew in years to come that I would compare my boys' hands to those tiny prints and be amazed at how they had grown.

One day Aaron was playing close to the shelf that held the plaster hand prints. He came running to me crying. He was heartbroken because he had knocked the hand prints off of the shelf and it now was in two pieces. My first reaction was one of anger mixed with sadness. This was an irreplaceable piece of our family's history. As I looked at my precious son, I couldn't be angry at him. He, too, was very sad, and my tears only added to his sorrow. I reached over and hugged Aaron and said to him, "The hand prints were special to me, but they are just a thing. You are more important to me than things. We can glue the hand prints."

And we did. I still have the hand prints. Now they rest in a china cupboard my grandfather made along with other pieces of

our family history. However, I now have a story to tell about the hand prints with the jagged cut down the middle of them. It has actually become more precious to me because of its jagged scar.

There is another story of scars that I hold precious in my heart. Those are the scars that Jesus bears on His hands, feet and side. These scars tell the story of God, who cared so much for us that He sacrificed His son for our sins. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

When Jesus died at Calvary, He took the sin of each and every person upon Himself. Because of His sacrifice, we can enjoy eternal life in Heaven. All we have to do is accept His gift of salvation. When we realize our sin and our need for the Savior, we should run to God. Just as Aaron ran to me and I took him in my arms, God longs for us to come to Him. He knows that we are broken, and He longs to hold us in His embrace.

During the Easter season I am reminded that not only did Jesus die on the cross for my sins, but then, on the third day, He rose from the dead, conquering sin and death once and for all. The scars that He bears are precious because they are proof of His love for each one of us.

Bauder is a member of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. Reprinted with permission by Living Stone News (livingstonenews.com).