

THE LUTHERAN 

MARCH 2010

AMBASSADOR



*He will proclaim peace
to the nations.*

*This rule will extend
from sea to sea and from
the river to the ends of
the earth.*

*As for you, because of
the blood of my covenant
with you, I will free
your prisoners from the
waterhole.*

*Hope
in the
cross*

God cares

BY SARAH VANCE

I would only have \$28 left. That was if I did indeed put my tithe into the offering plate that Sunday morning. As I sat in the pew, I was trying so hard to figure out if I could make it for the next six days on \$28. I knew I would be OK with gas and groceries for sure if I just skipped putting my money in the offering plate. After all, God would understand, I rationalized.

God knew I was a full-time nursing student at NDSU, trying to pay my way through college, trying to stay debt-free, trying to do my best working as much as possible. Besides working part-time as a nursing assistant at MeritCare Hospital in Fargo, N.D., I was also a part-time youth worker at Maranatha Free Lutheran in Glyndon, Minn. My next payday was the following Friday. What should I do?

I wrote out the check, not knowing if I could put it in the offering plate. The service started, and we began worshiping and praising Jesus. As I lifted my heart to heaven and fixed my eyes on the Lord, He melted my worry away.

"Trust Me. I will help you and take care of you. I love you."

I was moved during the worship. It was as if this was God's message to me during the praise songs. I knew then what I was supposed to do. I put my check in the offering plate, sensing relief that I had obeyed and also a special closeness with the Lord.

My story doesn't end there. After the offering, we had a special time of greeting. A dear grandmother of some of the youths I worked with approached me during the greeting time. She reached for my hand to shake it, and her eyes were so gentle and loving. She said, "God bless you, Sarah, for encouraging my grandchildren and helping them to grow closer to Jesus!"



I was about to tell her what an honor it was to serve them, when I suddenly realized she was pressing something into my hand—two \$20 bills. I could hardly speak. I could

only choke out a thank you and give her a hug.

Little did she know that God used her to remind me of such an important lesson. Even when I was struggling to trust in Him to provide, He didn't give up on me. He would be faithful to supply all my needs.

People have needs all around us. Many are struggling to pay bills each month. Others are lonely, aching for closeness and friendship. Some need support during a family crisis. And still more people need forgiveness of sins and assurance of salvation. How can you be used by God to meet the needs of those around you today?

Are you struggling with putting your full trust in Jesus? Whatever the need or circumstance, God cares. He promises to supply all your needs. When we put our trust in Christ, He will be faithful to provide every provision and the power to enable us to live for Him. May you be blessed as you trust in God to be faithful for your every need.

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It is not thy hold on Christ that saves thee; it is Christ.
It is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee; it is Christ.
It is not even thy faith in Christ, though that be the
instrument; it is Christ's blood and merit.

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to sing to him, and say, "Lord Jesus, you are my righteousness, I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours. You have become what you were not so that I might become what I was not."

—Martin Luther

The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of Christianity. If the resurrection did not take place, then Christianity is a false religion. If it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute truth.

—Henry Morris

If your sins often appear too great, then think how great He is who suffered for your sins. He is God's Son. Should not such blood be able to pay for your sins?

—C.F.W. Walther



Proof of Love

BY PATRICIA BALLMANN



I love Easter time: the great and vast richness of powerful truths packed into the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ always invigorates and renews my soul's heartfelt worship of God. There are so many aspects of God's character that culminate in Christ's Passion Week, not the least of which is His immense love. In fact, Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection are the two most important evidences of God's love and are the main basis of my hope and confidence in the character and love of God.

Let's first look at the confidence we have in the love of God through Jesus' death. Romans 5:8 states, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." How beautiful, how wonderful this passage is! I don't have to worry about earning God's love—He already bestowed it on me and continues to do so, independent of my actions. According to Romans, the proof of this amazing, unmerited love is His death on the cross for me, taking my sin and punishment. Amazingly, He died for all mankind, whether they ever come to believe and trust Him or not. How sad it is that many choose to reject this supreme gift of love.

Scripture is full of verses emphasizing the evidence of God's love through the cross. For instance, I John 4:9 proclaims, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." God's love is not only spoken in words, it is proven in deeds. In I John 3:16a, it says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." Christ's death showed us in a tangible way the depth of love God bore for us. Even more striking is the realization that God knew from the foundation of the world that He would have to redeem mankind through the shed-

ding of His own blood. He knew the pain and anguish He would have to bear on our behalf, and yet He still chose to speak this world into existence and fashion each one of us in our mothers' wombs. What a glorious Savior!

I work for a crisis pregnancy center, and one thing I try to communicate to each client who walks in the door is the immensity of God's love for her. Many of the women are already mothers, so to illustrate God's love, I have them picture one of their children in their minds and recall their love for that child. I ask: "Would you do anything to save that child's life?" Most, if not all, respond positively. Next I tell them to imagine sacrificing their child's life to save someone else. Then, I tell them, imagine killing your own child to save a cockroach. It's an imperfect comparison, but it helps them begin to grasp the depth of the Father's love for us and how undeserving we are of it.


The well-known passage of John 3:16 brings the next point into focus: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God, in His radical love, not only sent His Son to die, He did so with the express purpose of bringing us everlasting life. This is the hope I have through the resurrection of

Christ. If the story had stopped when Jesus died, it would have been incomplete, leaving us with a prospect of death without the hope of eternal life. But thanks be to God, He still had more to write! The resurrection brings all the joy and triumph into the love story of God's redemption for mankind. He conquered death and hell through rising again. Now He offers us not only unconditional love, but also eternal life with the joy of unending communion with Him. How glad I am that I never have to part with my Savior again.

Christ is my best friend, the Lover of my soul who was willing to sacrifice His life out of His intense love and desire to reconcile me to Himself. He now gives me both forgiveness of sins and eternal life, both paid for by His life's blood. I couldn't ask for any higher proofs of God's love than these. As you celebrate this special Lenten and Easter season, reflect and meditate on the sure, unmerited love of your Savior, so vividly and actively demonstrated for you. I am confident that as you do so, He will fill you with His fullness (Ephesians 3:14-21) and that you will come to cherish this time all the more.

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

More than a wish



BY PASTOR JOHN MUNDFROM

Hope, like many other common terms people use frequently, is often misunderstood. In its common usage today, “hope” is far from the certain expectation we find in the Bible. A recent issue of the *Readers’ Digest* carried an article entitled, “Hoping for Heaven?” In it, people all over the world were asked what they expected to happen after they died. The article reported that 91 percent of Americans are *hoping* they will end up in heaven after they die. And the vast majority of people in country after country hold similar beliefs regarding this hope of heaven. But it’s evident that the hope referred to by those surveyed is not the same kind of hope that Paul describes in Colossians 1:27.

Most of the time people use the word “hope” to mean something like, “I wish,” or, “It would be nice if ...” You hear expressions such as, “I *hope* it doesn’t rain tomorrow,” “I *hope* 2010 is a better year than 2009,” or, like the survey respondents above, “I *hope* to go to heaven when I die.” When used in this way, hope is very uncertain—the word carries a sense of wanting things to be different, but never knowing for sure that they will be. Such hope expresses a longing for a better future, but also implies that the outcome can never be known with certainty.

In the Word of God, however, hope is *not* uncertain at all! Biblical hope is a confident assurance that what God has already promised will come to pass. When Christians talk about their “hope,” it’s because they have confidence in what the Scriptures teach. They trust God and take Him at His Word. For example, believers hope for eternal life because God has promised life everlasting in heaven to all who believe and trust in Christ Jesus as their Savior from sin, as John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him may not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Believers also hope for the imminent return of Christ to earth because that is exactly what Jesus promised to His disciples before He ascended to heaven. “If I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come again ...” (John 14:3).

Finally, believers hope for God’s provision of strength and endurance when facing life’s trials and difficulties because God has promised never to abandon those who belong to Him. “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5).

This hope is real; it is not uncertain in any way! True biblical hope isn’t merely a wish or a desire that wavers frequently depending on how circumstances turn out in the future. This Christian hope is drastically different and more firm than a wish for the weather to change or the economic situation to improve.

We, as believers in Christ, confidently proclaim this certain and sure hope because of the cross and what it means for our future. It was at Calvary that Jesus overcame sin, death and the devil. By taking on the sins of the whole world, along with the punishment that those sins deserved, He accomplished something that no ordinary human being could ever have done. He satisfied the just demands of God’s holy and righteous character in our place. Because of what Jesus did, there is nothing left for us to do—other than trust that His work was sufficient.

The cross was the culmination of everything God had promised in the Old Testament, so that all of human history

centers in this one great event. It is the focal point upon which our Christian faith is based. So when Jesus subsequently rose from the grave triumphant and victorious, the future hope of every Christian believer was signed, sealed, and delivered.

The next time you come across the word “hope” in the Bible, remember the difference between what our world calls hope and what Scripture teaches. When the living Lord Jesus Christ comes to indwell the one who believes and trusts in His saving work at Calvary’s cross, He also instills in that Christ-follower the sure hope of a bodily resurrection from the dead and the future glory of heaven itself.

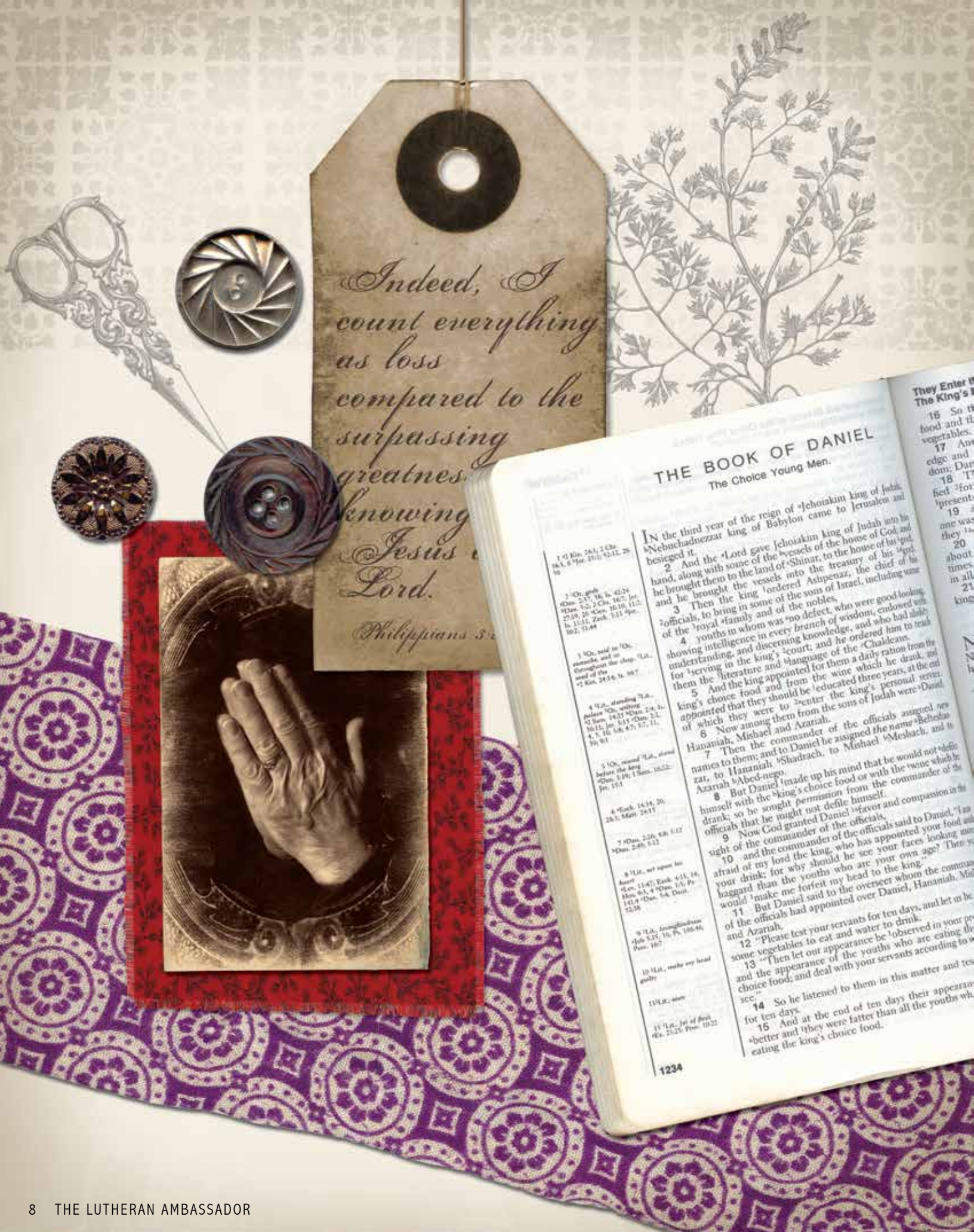
It may be difficult for us weak human beings to grasp hold of this truth because we cannot see beyond today; from our perspective the future remains an uncertain mystery. But remember, our hope is anchored in the past—the finished work of Christ on the cross—and even though we cannot know what tomorrow’s circumstances may bring, we know the One who has never broken a promise, and never will. The Apostle Paul proclaimed this confident hope in these words, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Mundfrom, Eugene, Ore., serves on the AFLC’s Publications and Parish Education Committee.

*Christ in you
the hope
of glory.*

Colossians 1:27





Indeed, I
count everything
as loss
compared to the
surpassing
greatness
of knowing
Jesus
Lord.
Philippians 3:8

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The Choice Young Men.

IN the third year of the reign of ¹Jehoiakim king of Judah, ²Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ³And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God, and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. ⁴Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, ⁵youths in whom was no defect, who were good looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding, and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court, and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁶And the king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they were to enter the king's personal service. ⁷Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁸Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach, and to Azariah Abednego. ⁹But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. ¹⁰Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking like those of the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king." ¹¹But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us have some vegetables to eat and water to drink." ¹²Then let our appearance be observed in your presence, and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see." ¹³So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. ¹⁴And at the end of ten days their appearance was better and they were fatter than all the youths who were eating the king's choice food.

Your perspective

BY MONICA COYLE



When was the last time you picked up a newspaper and noticed a warning label on the front page? “Caution: side effects may include fear, discouragement and anxiety.”

A look at today’s headlines of world news can be frightening, to say the least. Terrorist attacks, nuclear threats, and religious persecution only begin to list the calamities.

Recently I read a publication about the persecuted church, which featured a global report of restricted and hostile nations. I couldn’t help the sense of discouragement and fear that weighed heavy on my heart. How are our persecuted brothers and sisters able to endure such intense hostility? What about the growing adversity we face on our own soil here in America?

Certainly, we live in times of worldwide terror. Yet violence and persecution have never been absent from human history. As we seek a perspective rooted in faith rather than fear, the prophet Daniel offers us valuable insight.

In Daniel 11, we find a vision pertaining to the Jewish people. It shows them a preview of life prior to the Roman Empire and before the coming of Christ, specifically the plagues of Antiochus.

Antiochus, otherwise known as “The Mad Man” because of his rage against Jews, would make every effort to obliterate the faith of God’s people and introduce pagan practices. How devastating this news must have been for the Jewish people! Yet in the midst of tragedy, Daniel’s prophecy held a promise of great encouragement: “He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action,” (Daniel 11:32).

Here we see the key to the perspective we seek—the call to know our God. Apart from knowing Jesus Christ by grace through

faith, we are lost in a world that defies all that is true. As in the days of Antiochus, when many were seduced away from the faith, the world in which we live seeks to turn our hearts from God. It is vital that we know who God is and who He has declared us to be in Christ. The greater our understanding of the gospel, the greater we are able to see through the deception that seeks to entice us. May we say with the Apostle Paul, “Indeed, I count everything as loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,” (Philippians 3:8).

Daniel points out two effects of knowing our God. We see the effect, the call to stand firm, as we look back in biblical history to the year 167 B.C. Daniel’s immediate prophecy is fulfilled as opponents of Antiochus, led by the Maccabees, resisted his orders. While some were tempted to abandon the covenant to save their lives, others stood firm. How, we might ask? Because they knew their God.

How are we to stand firm in the culture in which we live? Despite living in a culture opposed to God, by God’s grace we can resist the temptation to compromise. Daniel himself lived as an example of faithful resistance and undeterred obedience.

For many of our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, standing firm involves the loss of all they hold dear, even life itself. Praise God for their unshakable faith. May God grant each of us His strength to stand

firm as we follow Him.

A second effect of knowing our God, as we see in Daniel 11:32, is the motivation to take action. The Jewish resistance against Antiochus’ persecution resulted in the saving of many lives. Likewise, when we know the Lord, He enables us to do the good works which He prepared for us to do. As each of us follow God’s plan for our lives, He graciously works through us to draw others to Him. May we boldly take action and declare the reason for the hope that we have. The world is waiting!

As we celebrate Christ’s death and resurrection this Easter, we proclaim His victory over sin, death and the power of the devil. May this reality shape our perspective as we face the trials of this life.

When knowing Christ Jesus our Lord is our greatest treasure, we are enabled to face with certainty whatever may come in our lives here on earth. We can stand firm and take action as God’s people did in the days of Antiochus, and all throughout history. We can live with confidence as Martin Luther’s hymn, *A Mighty Fortress*, declares: “And though this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us; We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.”

Coyle lives in Radcliffe, Iowa, where her husband, Pastor Andy Coyle, serves Salem Lutheran and St. Paul’s Lutheran, Jewell.



Peace to you

BY DAVID OLSON

“As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have’” (Luke 24:36-39).

Picture a room in Jerusalem. Gathered together are pretty much all who are left of the followers of Christ. They are understandably confused. Christ died. They saw their Rabbi and Lord breathe His last. They know where His body was laid. Those things were unquestionable. Now, however, His body is missing. Some are claiming to have seen Him—alive! At this point the doors fling open.

“We’ve seen Him! On the road! He met us!”

In come two men with more tales of having seen Jesus, this time on the road, and of breaking bread with Him. Certainly this isn’t helping the confusion. Is it true? Are they on the level, or are they going mad with grief?

Can you imagine the turmoil these days and this moment must have caused for those disciples? Sometimes life is dark and confusing. It can be different for everyone, but we all struggle. For you it may be circumstances around you, the death of a family member or close friend, the loss of a job, a straying family member, or any myriad of other circumstances. For all of us there is also the constant voice of accusation screaming, “You sinner, you have no right for mercy in any area.”

We may hear about hope, even as the disciples did, but perhaps we do not know what to make of it all.

“Peace to you,” said Jesus as He appeared among them.

Can you possibly imagine? Even as the disciples are turning the recent events over

in their heads, suddenly, there He is. Even as the disciples struggle with whether this could possibly be real, even as they try to figure out if this is really Jesus standing in front of them, God shows even more grace. Jesus has already died for these stubborn people of little faith. And He’s already risen for them. He has already appeared to some of them and sent them back to tell the other stubborn people of little faith. And after doing all of this, He comes and personally reveals Himself to them, and says, “Peace to you.”

The peace that Christ offered was not a polite greeting. He was presenting Himself as a very real, physically risen Christ and Lord. The peace that Christ offered was the peace of knowing that yes, indeed, He is risen. The implications are



profound! Christ raised from the dead validates every claim He ever made. It confirms that He indeed died for our sins, that His sacrifice was accepted, that His claim to be God was fact, not fiction, that the whole of Scripture stands confirmed as true, and that sinners like you and me have hope. Oh, this is peace indeed!

When you think of the many things in life that may have us swirling and confused, hear the words of Jesus when He says, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

In many situations when we ask the question, "Why?" we honestly will never know the answer. But God has not left us

to hang in thin air with nothing. He offered Himself to His disciples not just in His sacrifice on the cross, but we see that in His risen body He offered Himself again as proof. He knows our weakness. He knows our proficiency at doubting. He did not leave His resurrection as something to be debated. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:6 that not only did Jesus appear to the men on the road, and here to the gathered disciples, but even to a group of 500 brothers at one time! Jesus gave His disciples abundant presentations of Himself, even presenting Himself to be touched as well as seen, and eating in front of them, offering them no room for doubt that He was the Risen Christ (Luke 24:41-43).

I Corinthians 15 is the greatest thesis I know on the significance of His resurrec-

tion, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins."

But He *is* raised! And in His statement, "Peace to you," Jesus' resurrection offers hope to us in our broken, crippled, sinful state. Moreover, He has presented Himself as risen in such a way as to remove all possible doubt of this reality.

So here we stand, in any and every circumstance, looking to our risen Savior, claiming His blood and resurrection as our hope both in this life and the one to come.

Olson, a senior at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, is a member of Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Cokato, Minn.



Turning

BY PASTOR JAMES MOLSTRE

I sat next to Clarence, one of my favorite people. I had known him for many years. He was always a kind and generous man in whom the Holy Spirit had been working and in whom the fruit of the Spirit was evident. His body had been ravaged by cancer for the past two years and he was very weak. As I sat in his living room, he was in a recliner with a smile on his face.

"Pastor, I've been thinking about my mansion," he said to me. "I'm picturing a beautiful library, you know how I love to read, with a comfortable chair, a fireplace, and a peaceful setting, sitting down to read a good book."

His face was glowing as he talked about heaven. He was longing for eternity.


Finally I said to this weak, dying man, "Clarence, I envy you. You will soon be face to face with Jesus."

He smiled, "Yes, I will soon see Jesus."

Clarence saw Jesus a few days later. The funeral that followed was a beautiful time of praise to God for His goodness and His grace, with an emphasis on God's gift of His Son, Jesus, who died to give Clarence and each one of us eternal life. The family was comforted knowing that Clarence had been trusting Jesus all of his life. His death wasn't a tragic event, but seemed to be the natural course for one who lived for Christ. Clarence' wife, kids and friends were grieving. Those of us who considered Clarence a friend grieved that we would never again have the opportunity to talk and laugh with



sorrow into joy



our friend, but we were all so happy for him. That is what the resurrection of Jesus does for us. It turns sorrow into joy, and it turns despair into hope.

We will often read from 1 Corinthians 15 at our funeral services. Verses 13 and 14 always startle me: "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." Verse 17 says, "You are still in your sins." Verse 19 tells us "we are of all people most to be pitied." As I read, I find myself racing to verse 20, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead." As believers, our faith, our future, and our theology depends upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Christ has not been raised we have no reason to preach, and our faith is worthless. If Christ has not been raised, then when we stand by the bed of those who are dying we have no comfort to give them.

The one who has not trusted in Jesus has effectively denied the resurrection. Consider the contrast between Clarence and John.

I had not met John before I was asked to visit him in the hospital. His family was sure he would not live more than a couple of days. John was cordial but aloof. We talked for a while before I broached the subject of his faith. He immediately froze me out and refused to discuss it. I talked to his family and found that John had been very hard on his family; there were charges

of abuse and most of his family was hoping he would die soon. I went back every day for four days until John passed away. Each time I met with him he would get angry when I talked about his faith. He seemed not to care at all about eternity, and in fact was hostile toward me and everything he thought I stood for.

I had the funeral the next week. The mood was somber and there was very little comfort I could give to the family except that they themselves could be ready for eternity if they received God's offer of grace.

Grief ministry can be a fruitful time for evangelism. It is normally difficult to get people to think seriously about eternity, but not at the deathbed of a loved one. People standing before a casket, or sitting in the pew at a funeral begin to ask questions about their own lives and about their own mortality. Because Jesus did indeed rise again, we have an opening to share what His resurrection means for those who are unsure of their future.

If you are grieving, the resurrection can give you hope and the assurance that one day "sorrow will be turned to joy" (John 16:20).

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At the

BY PASTOR MARC RAKOW

Where do you look for hope? There are the comforts of home, close friends, and the expensive supercharged coffees or colas to consider. Each of these we can experience for a time, while gaining a sense of renewal and hope in some form.

The comforts of home can center on the security and sanctuary we find in family. Close friends are typically those people willing to share the truth we need, while we experience the love and support of someone who truly cares. A good cup of coffee for some is tied to a hope-filled start to the day. However, there has to be something more than a caffeine jolt that follows, right?

The expensive drink, the comforts of home, and close friends are only able to bring hope if they are tied to Jesus, the real hope giver. Yet even as believers who know this truth, how often are we caught looking elsewhere? How often do we search for hope in the temporary avenues of this world?

There is something to be said for finding some true hope tied to the comforts of a Christ-centered home, just as there is real hope for renewal in a friend who follows Jesus and challenges us to do so, as well. But there is something truly special in the experience of the most expensive and precious drink of all.

This drink brings great hope because of the inseparable connection to Jesus. Yes, it is the cup offered to us freely at the Lord's Table.

It is in those moments at the Lord's Table when we receive and find an experience like no other. The reminder of what it cost Almighty God to sacrifice His only Son seems to be most evident as quiet and somber emotions are displayed at His table. Yet the power to arise anew having been filled with ongoing hope is our experience, as well. A powerful renewal sends our soul skipping away, even if our mind is fixed on the cleansing and purifying aspects of the truth.

Jesus told us of this sustaining hope that is tied to the cup He offers. "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:27-29).

As followers of Jesus we have been given an opportunity to come and receive hope and renewal from our Lord at His table. This time provides an experience of immediate forgiveness and the encouragement we all need. The promise we receive in meeting with our Lord also includes a real hope-filled picture to be experienced. Jesus points us to the time when we will drink anew with our Lord in Heaven. Yes, at the Lord's Table we experience forgiveness, but Jesus tells us that this new life carries with it a hope for our future. This biblical picture promises that we will drink with Jesus anew in His Kingdom!

What could be better than experiencing renewed hope for today while being reminded of the hope to come? Above and beyond that future hope is the promise of sharing this experience in the comforts of home. Jesus put before us the place where we will experience this drinking anew with Him in the "Father's Kingdom." This is our true home and it is there that we will enjoy

the comforts of home. The sanctuary and stability we crave as we walk through the uncertainty of this world is found in our coming home. What a picture, the most precious cup being enjoyed within the perfect comforts of home. Does it get any better than this? It most certainly does!

Our picture of hope includes the presence of our greatest friend. "While they were eating Jesus took the bread" (Matthew 26:26). In this account we see the disciples enjoying great fellowship as they share in the Last Supper together. The truly great Friend for each of them and for us is found in Jesus. We see it was with those whom He walked with daily—those with whom He shared his life and ministry—that He announces the hope to come. Jesus is Lord! He deserves to be worshiped, served, and honored above all else, but here He is reclining as a friend. A great friend is part of the great hope we find in Jesus, as He presents Himself to us.

The biblical picture of the Lord's Supper reveals a real hope of priceless worth. It is something worth taking in and remembering the next time you find yourself looking for hope in a pricey drink, the comforts of home, or a friend.

Rakow serves United Lutheran, Laurel, Neb.

Lord's Table

BY KAREN PEDERSON

At the cross

Many women were at the cross, watching from a distance. We're told in Matthew 27:55 that these women had followed Jesus from Galilee in order to serve Him by caring for His needs.

We know that Mary was there. How could a mother not be there with her child? In her anguish and tears, did she think of all the people whom Jesus had touched? At the birth of Jesus, we're told that Mary pondered all these things in her heart. She had much to treasure, remembering back to the announcement of His birth, the angels, and meeting Simeon at the temple, when he prophesied that a "sword would pierce her soul." Did Mary understand the work of salvation that God was doing? Her heart was pierced that day just as Simeon had told her some 30 years earlier.

Mary Magdalene was at the cross that day, too. Jesus had changed her life when He cast out the demons who had control of her. Then she followed Him—followed Him to the cross with deep love. Jesus said that she had prepared His body for burial with her perfume and dried His feet with her tears. Of course Mary Magdalene was at the cross.

Do you think the woman whom Jesus healed just because of her faith when she touched the hem of His garment was there at the cross watching from a distance? What about the mother whose son Jesus raised from the dead? Was she a part of the crowd that mourned that day at the cross? And the woman caught in adultery who was to be stoned by the Pharisees before Jesus challenged them, "He who is without sin cast the first stone." Her life was saved when Jesus forgave her and challenged her to go and sin no more. Was she at the cross that day? The woman at the well whom Jesus took time to confront, teach, love and restore; was she part of the group of women at the cross? Her life was changed that day by the Savior.

Was Mary sitting at foot of the cross, just like the time she had made it a priority to sit with Jesus rather than help Martha care for the needs of Jesus and His followers? Did Mary and Martha remember Jesus' words from that day with Lazarus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," as they watched His life blood flow from His body hanging on the cross?

There were many at the cross that day watching from a distance, some watching out of curiosity or disdain. But there were also many like these women, watching out of love. Were you there when they crucified my Lord? We were all there that day because when Jesus died He took the sins of the whole world on His body. I was there, like these women, out of a deep love for Jesus. This Jesus, who died for me, took my sin and changed my life. Yes, I was there with the women at the cross.

Pederson, first vice president of the national Women's Missionary Federation, is a member of Zion Lutheran, Tioga, N.D.



It is written.



BY DAVID OLSON

After prayer and deliberation, members of the Free Lutheran Youth Committee have chosen the theme for the 2011 convention, “It is Written,” with the theme verses coming from John 20:30-31, “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

This world drifts this way and that after its own desires and passions and is devoid of any foundation. Therefore, we as the body of Christ need to be pointing to the One who is truth Himself. “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).

How do we point to the truth? How else than by pointing to the Word of God, to “that which is written.” The power of the Word drives into hearts today with the same force as when it was written. That is what we anticipate with the 2011 convention—the power of the Word of God changing hearts and lives.

So why are the members of the FLY Committee so excited about *this* theme? Have you ever considered how the Scriptures are tied together with the person of Jesus Christ? The whole of Scripture points to Christ. We scarcely have time to finish reading about Adam and Eve’s fall from grace at the beginning of the Scriptures when God’s promise of Christ’s coming resounds off the page (Genesis 3:15). Throughout Scripture the signs pointing to Christ spring from the pages until finally, “when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law” (Galatians 4:4).

The connection continues further. Consider John 1:1, “In the

beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” Not only does God’s Word point to Christ, Christ is described as the “Word.”

Our committee members are excited to learn more about the centrality of the Word. The Word is how God reveals Himself to us—both in the written Scriptures and in the Word become flesh, Christ Himself. Think about this: God’s Word lived, breathed, and walked among us. How much more specific and intimate with truth can you get?

Finally, we find this promise in Paul’s letter to Timothy, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (II Timothy 3:16-17). Our committee rests on this promise, knowing that God’s Word is always faithful—both the written Word and the “Word become flesh,” Jesus.

Join us in prayer throughout the next 18 months leading up to the FLY Convention, scheduled for July 4-8, 2011. Ask that God would lead and guide the committee in planning the convention, but most of all, that God would proclaim His gospel and be glorified throughout the process, especially during the FLY Convention itself. We are confident that by God’s grace those who attend will be pointed to Christ and be emboldened to stand on His Word. For after all, “it is written.”

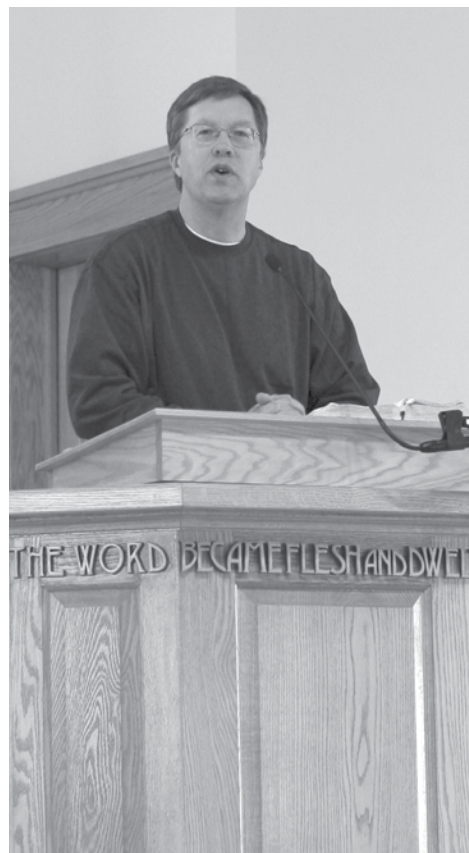
Olson, a senior at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn., is the first vice president of the FLY 2011 Committee.

Register now for WMF Day

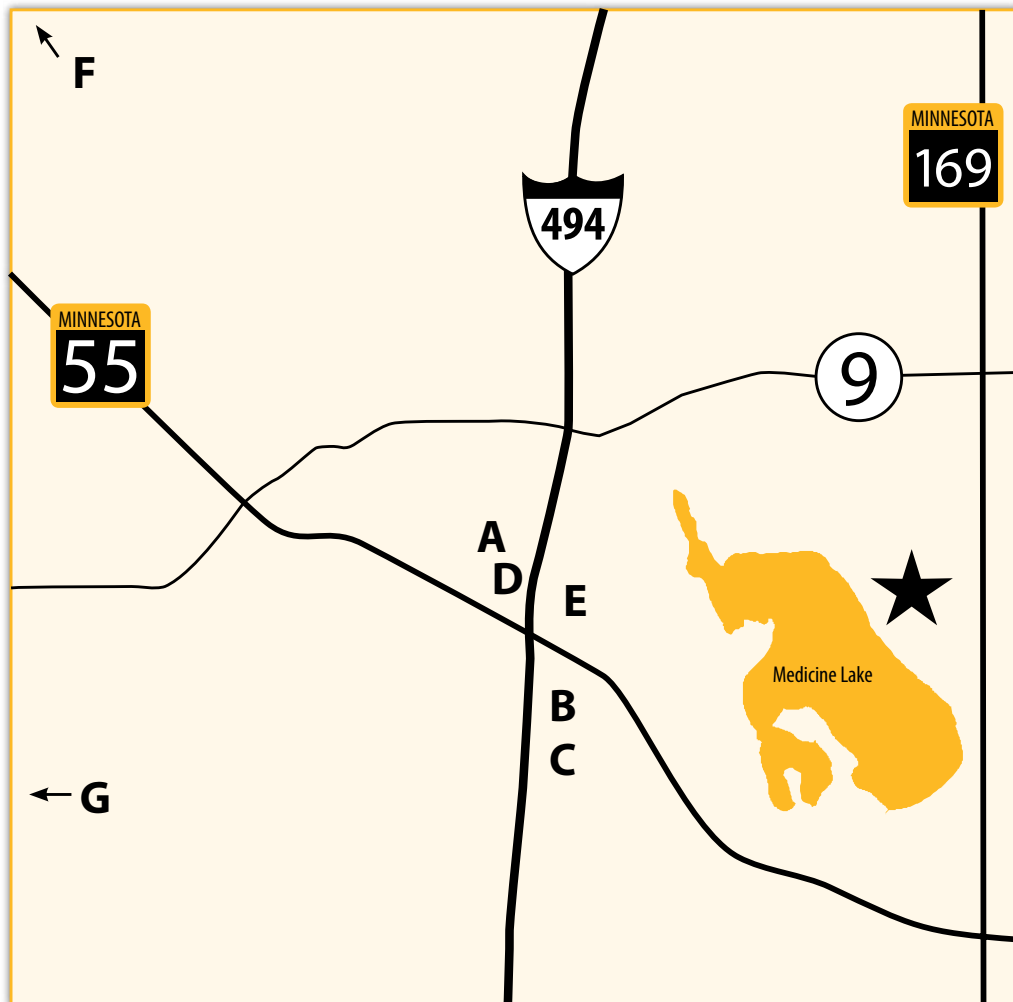
Convention theme focuses on encouragement

The National Women's Missionary Federation (WMF) is pleased to announce our annual WMF Day has been scheduled for June 15 on the beautiful campus of the AFLC in Plymouth, Minn. We invite you to join us as we study God's Word, fellowship together, attend workshops, and sing praises to Him using the theme: "Encourage one another ... for such a time as this" from Hebrews 10:25b and Esther 4:14b.

Please use the AFLC registration form on page 19 to register for the WMF convention, luncheon and banquet on June 15. The WMF leadership breakfast on the morning of June 16 is open to anyone who is interested in women's ministries. We pray that we will see you there.



Pastor Jeff Swanson, Naknek, Alaska, was a special speaker during the AFLC Schools annual Missions Conference held Jan. 24-28 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus.



Housing for 2010 conference

The 2010 annual conference will be held June 15-18 on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn. The conference committee has gathered information on available housing for conference attendees. The options range from on-campus dorm housing to hotels and campgrounds. The map at right shows the approximate location of the campus (noted by star) and the housing options (A-G).

Campus dorms will be available to rent for the week. Options include \$25/night for a two-person room or \$35/night for three to four people. There is a one-time charge of \$10 for bedding per person. A limited number of air conditioning units are also available for \$10/day. Call (763) 544-9501 to reserve a room.

A: Comfort Inn, 3000 Harbor Lane, Plymouth. One king or two double beds for \$75/night. Call (763) 559-1222 or visit www.comfortinn.com.

B: Best Western, 2705 North Annapolis Lane, Plymouth. One king or queen, two queens or two doubles for \$75/night. Call (800) 528-1234 or visit www.bestwesternplymouth.com.

C: Red Roof Inn, 2600 Annapolis Lane, Plymouth. One king for \$55/night; two doubles for \$60/night; one king with microwave and refrigerator for \$65/night. Call (763) 553-1751 or visit www.redroof.com.

D: Days Inn, 2955 Empire Lane, Plymouth. Any room for \$47/night with AFLC rate. Must make reservations 30 days in advance. Call (763) 559-2400.

E: Radisson Hotel, 3131 Campus Drive, Plymouth. One king or two doubles for \$109/night. Call (763) 559-6600.

F: KOA campground, Maple Grove. Call (763) 420-2255.

G: Baker Campground, 2309 Baker Park Road, Maple Plain. Call (763) 559-6700 or visit www.threeriversparks.org.

annual conference REGISTRATION

June 15-18 at the AFLC Schools, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, Minn.

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

First name: _____ Spouse (if attending): _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

AFLC Congregation: _____

Other Congregation: _____

Membership (Check one)

You: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Spouse: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Name of person attending WMF Convention on June 15: _____

Please indicate the number of children attending: _____ 5 and younger _____ 6-12 _____ 13-17

Meals and banquets: Children ages 5 and younger eat free. Board and committee members must register for applicable meals. When two options are available, please check which meal(s) you will be attending by marking the number of those attending in box(es) before meal. **Meal registration must be received by May 31.**

Meal	Ages 13-Adult	#	Ages 6-12	#	Total
Tuesday Conference breakfast	\$5.50		\$2.75		\$
Tuesday Conference Committee lunch	\$7		N/A		\$
Tuesday WMF luncheon	\$7		N/A		\$
Tuesday WMF banquet	\$8.50		N/A		\$
Wednesday breakfast: <input type="checkbox"/> WMF advisory board <input type="checkbox"/> Conference	\$5.50		\$2.75		\$
Wednesday lunch: <input type="checkbox"/> Builder's Fellowship <input type="checkbox"/> Conference	\$8.50		\$4.25		\$
Wednesday dinner: <input type="checkbox"/> School's Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Conference	\$8.50		\$4.25		\$
Thursday breakfast: <input type="checkbox"/> Mission Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Conference	\$5.50		\$2.75		\$
Thursday lunch: <input type="checkbox"/> ARC Corporation <input type="checkbox"/> Conference	\$8.50		\$4.25		\$
Thursday Conference dinner	\$8.50		\$4.25		\$
Thursday Pastors and Wives banquet	\$15		N/A		\$
Friday breakfast: <input type="checkbox"/> FLAPS <input type="checkbox"/> Conference	\$5.50		\$2.75		\$
Friday Conference lunch	\$8.50		\$4.25		\$
Friday Conference dinner	\$8.50		\$4.25		\$
Total meals					\$
Conference registration fee (\$30 single/\$40 couple)					\$
WMF convention registration fee (\$7)					\$
Total registration and meals					\$

Make checks payable to "AFLC" and mail to: AFLC, c/o Conference Registration, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Georg Sverdrup Society hosts forum



The Georg Sverdrup Society exists to promote greater understanding of the ideas and work of Georg Sverdrup (1848-1907), the founder of the Lutheran Free Church movement. The goal is to help people understand better the roots of the AFLC so that we might more effectively live out the dream of free and living congregations. One of the ways it does this is by organizing discussion forums like the one held at the Free Lutheran Seminary campus on Jan. 29. The forum looked at the topic: "Georg Sverdrup and the Servant Pastor."

The society also publishes an annual journal. Some copies of the 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 editions of the journal are available and can be purchased as a set of four for \$10. Membership in the society is encouraged and open to all. The membership dues help pay for the printing of the journal. Regular membership is \$25 a year. Membership for students, congregations and libraries is \$15. Congregations are encouraged to belong to the society in order to get a copy of the journal for their church library.

To order copies of past journals and to start a membership in the society contact the treasurer: Pastor Kris Nyman, P.O. Box 400, Beulah, ND 58523. For more information on the society, visit its Web site at www.georgsverdrupsociety.org.

TOP: Seminary students from the Free Lutheran Seminary, along with other guests, attended the Georg Sverdrup Society Forum, which focused on the theme of the servant pastor. After the presentation of several papers, a panel discussion was held, with Loiell Dyrud, Pastor Robert Lee, Pastor Terry Olson and Dr. Francis Monseth leading the discussion.
RIGHT: Loiell Dyrud participates in the panel discussion.



Jungle ministry

BY JUSTO PILLMAN

No! That last sack of green bananas cannot come along.” These were the last words I heard before the roar of the airplane’s engine blocked out all other sounds. I was deep in the Ecuadorian jungle, far from any roads, cell towers or power lines. The only link to the outside world is by long, muddy trails, or by the airstrip.

The aircraft began to lurch forward and slowly pick up speed as the veteran missionary pilot skillfully worked to free the tires from the grasp of the muddy airstrip. It wasn’t an easy task. The rain had just stopped, and besides cargo the plane had its limit of four passengers, and a monkey for good measure. Much to my relief, we were soon safely off the ground and skimming just above the jungle canopy.

It was then that my pilot friend looked over and said, “Well, that was close.”

When I began my ministry in Ecuador a year and a half ago, I had no expectations of being involved in jungle ministry. I was called by the Lutheran congregation Paz de Dios to serve the youth and home school families in the church. Paz de Dios is located in the city of Cuenca, high in the Andes, and is not jungle in any sense of the word. Since my arrival, it has been exciting to see how the Lord has opened doors and used youths from the church together with technology to further His kingdom in the jungle.

One of the tools the missionary pilot uses frequently in his ministry is gospel films. He flies into a jungle community, shows a short film, sings, and preaches to those who gather around. The film is a powerful way to capture the people’s attention and present the gospel. Unfortunately, there are very, very few films translated into the jungle dialects. This is where the youth come into play.

I look for youths in the church who have an interest in missions and know computers. Together, we grab our laptops and travel eight hours or more by bus to Shell, the town at the edge of



the jungle where the missionary pilot lives. As a team, we work together with the missionary and native speakers to translate films into the distinct jungle languages.

The Lord has abundantly blessed these times of film translation. The jungle communities are blessed by being able to listen to the films in their own languages. The missionary pilot is blessed, and the youths from the church are blessed with the opportunity of experiencing missions firsthand. On one occasion, after we had finished editing a movie, the missionary flew us into a jungle village to be able to personally share the film with the local community for the first time.

In Colossians 3 Paul says, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

I could not have imagined the ministry, opportunities, and experiences the Lord would open through film editing. Not all of us live hours away from the jungle. Not all of us can edit films. But the Lord has given each of us unique skills. He has ministry and adventure waiting for all who will surrender their lives to Him. What can you do, what are you *doing* in word and deed for Him?

Pillman is a short-term mission assistant with AFLC World Missions. He serves in Cuenca, Ecuador.

AFLC memorials: January

AFLBS

Donald McLellan
Mavis Tenneboe
Edna Quanbeck
Victor Sletten
Hannah Quanbeck (3)
Evelyn Aas
Dianna Schmidt
Susan Anderson
Barbara Anderson
Alina Dallman
Catlin Bartuska
Tanner Jespersen
Gordon Berg
Dorothy Schmidt
Morris Gokrick
Anna Ruland
Valeria Olson
Oscar Sather
Dean Alsabrook
Annie Iverson
Slim Melgaard
Donald McLaughlin
David Christenson
Mike Pinkham

AFLTS

Hazel Enstad

All Departments

Pastor Don Duff
George Hartman

Ambassador Institute

Earl Hartsoch
Helen Mullum

Evangelism

Cambel & Olga Thompson
Clarence & Myrtle Skyberg

General Fund

Edna Quanbeck
Florence Myhre

Home Missions

Evelyn Ege
Olga Peterson
Ray Whitestar
Kirsten Booke
Cambel & Olga Thompson
Clarence & Myrtle Skyberg
Lt. Col. Terry Forness

Parish Education

Hannah Quanbeck

Vision

Cliff Bevolden
Mary Idell Knudsvig

World Missions

Hannah Quanbeck
Edna Quanbeck
Alice Halvorson
Walter Caouette

... in honor of

World Missions

Ron Thorson

ARC hosts upcoming retreats

A look at upcoming retreats at the Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

• AFLC Women’s Retreat

Will be held March 26-28 with speaker Rayleen Wilson, wife of Christian Motorcyclists Association National Evangelist Roger Wilson. With the theme, “Through the Looking Glass,” Rayleen is excited to share what God has done in her life and in the life of her family. She wants other women to know that there is a God of restoration who wants to make things new again if they are willing to let go of the past and go on.

• AFLC Men’s Retreat

Will be held April 23-24 with speaker Pastor Phil Hooper, who serves St. John’s Lutheran in Duluth, Minn. The theme for the retreat is “FEARLESS because of Christ” and is based on Psalm 27:1a: “The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear?” Some recreation activities include basketball, trap shooting and golf.

For more information on these retreats and future camps, contact the ARC by e-mail at arcregistration@centurytel.net or call 800-294-2877.

People and Places

Subscription rates for *The Lutheran Ambassador* magazine have been increased by \$2, effective March 1. Individual subscriptions are now \$20/year. Group subscriptions are \$19/year per subscription. Bulk rates are now \$17/year per subscription. And international subscriptions are now \$22/year.

Pastor Tim Hinrichs has accepted a call to serve Word of Life Free Lutheran, Mankato, Minn. Hinrichs, who is currently serving as a part-time instructor at the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn., will begin his ministry in Mankato sometime this summer.

Seven students from the **Ministry Training Institute** on the campus of the AFLC Schools began their on-site assignments at the end of January. Serving as parish workers at Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., are Rachel Johnson and Abby LaPlante. Serving with the Alaska Mission and KAKN Radio in Naknek, Alaska are Jordan Rumohr and Jacob O’Flanagan. Amanda Bellefy and Hannah Swanson are serving in Jerez, Mexico, with AFLC Missionaries Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk. Matt Rieniets is serving in youth ministry at Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash.

Format changes made in benevolence reporting

In order to more clearly report budget numbers, those voting at the 2009 annual conference approved a motion to change the AFLC benevolences reporting in *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Here is the conference resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED, in order to present a quick snapshot of the financial condition of each ministry, that *The Lutheran Ambassador* eliminate the percentage of total subsidy, and only display the previous month’s subsidy, year-to-date receipts, and previous year’s year to date total.

Those changes have been implemented, beginning with January’s reporting as seen below.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- Jan. 31, 2010			
FUND	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$27,000	\$27,000	27,625
Evangelism	34,602	34,602	6,096
Youth Ministries	40,893	40,893	5,167
Parish Education	7,562	7,562	8,009
Seminary	19,114	19,114	18,258
Bible School	69,542	69,542	25,934
Home Missions	96,359	96,359	27,057
World Missions	21,883	21,883	18,979
Personal Support	35,030	35,030	33,390
TOTALS	\$351,986	\$351,986	170,516
Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.			

Doing the hard work

After graduating from the University of Portland last year, Molly Hightower headed to the Caribbean. She was not going to soak up some sun. She went to volunteer at an orphanage in Haiti called Friends of the Orphans. She was there when the devastating earthquake hit the island on January 12. Along with many thousands of others in Haiti, Molly's life on this earth came to an end that day.



Pastor Craig Johnson

Even in today's struggling economy, Molly's talents and her college degree could have opened doors and set her on a road to gaining those material things so many Americans

think are necessities of life. But she chose to go and live in the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

The orphans Molly worked with are special needs kids. They are the poorest of the poor. Molly went to serve them because she could not find a place in more desperate need of help. "She wanted to be where people needed her the most," said a friend of hers.

She went to serve kids like Jacques, a 7-year-old abandoned by his mother on the steps of the American embassy. She served Yvonne, a girl with burn marks that were most likely the result of people trying to burn away her seizures. She served Watner, who had been found as an infant

in a pile of burning garbage. He had only half his fingers and scalp.

The earthquake wasn't the first time heartbreak hit Haiti. During the months before it happened, Molly told a friend "she had to bury kids each day."

Some may think serving special needs kids living in what seems to be an endless cycle of poverty in Haiti would be a crazy thing to do. They may think it is a tragedy and a waste that someone like Molly, who could have done so much with her life, would lose her life that way.

Sacrificing your life for needy orphans who seem to be in a hopeless situation is just the kind of crazy thing Jesus did.

"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8, NIV). The sacrifice Molly made is beyond what most people would do. Christ's sacrifice is beyond what anyone else would do. The holy, perfect Son of God died for undeserving, rebellious sinners like us.

When it comes to our spiritual condition we are like those kids in Haiti. We, by nature, are spiritual orphans. Others may try to help us and fix us, but they fail and often create new problems. We are in desperate need of care. We can't make it on our own.

Spiritually we are not cute, adorable

orphans whom everyone wants to adopt. We are like those special needs kids. We are the tough cases. We need extra attention. It takes hard work to deal with our problems. It took the cross. But Jesus was willing to do the hard work. He chose to do what was necessary, to suffer and die, so that we could be adopted into the family of God. "How great is the love the Father has

Sacrificing your life for needy orphans who seem to be in a hopeless situation is just the kind of crazy thing Jesus did.

lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1).

When Jesus died His disciples thought it was a tragedy; a life ended way too soon. But then came the resurrection. What had seemed senseless now made sense. "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26). The cross was necessary. We were "without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12-13). Because of the cross of Christ we can go from being needy spiritual orphans to being beloved and cared for children of God.

something to share

A test of barrenness

BY AMBER DAHL

Difficulty in conceiving children is not a new plight, although it is spoken of more freely in my generation. Everyone has an opinion about what a family should try to do in order to have a baby. Many spend thousands of dollars on treatments with no success. I have experienced such futility.

Before I married, I thought Hannah in the book of I Samuel was an ungrateful woman. She had a loving husband who cherished her, yet her unfulfilled desire to have children seemed to trump everything else good in her life. Her husband asked her, "Am I not more to you than ten sons?" (I Samuel 1:8).

After marrying I see Hannah much differently. It has been burdensome being different from all my friends who are having babies. For some time I struggled to find peace in this experience. The Lord reminded me of my harsh opinion of Hannah. I regretted it. Hannah has since become an example to me. She faithfully served and worshiped the Lord year after year, despite enduring provoking from her rival (her husband's second wife). She trusted the Lord to give her exactly what He wanted to give. Author and speaker Elisabeth Elliot says, "God's ultimate purpose in all suffering is joy. Scripture is full of songs of praise that came out of great trials." (See Exodus 15:1-2.)

God has shown me it is not that He *can't* give me children, but He hasn't yet for reasons known only to Him. He asks me constantly, "Do you trust me? Am I first in your life?" A mature, godly woman shared a nugget of wisdom from her barren experience:

"Throughout the Bible, God closes the womb of godly women. Many times He used these times as tests to see if they would trust Him and how they would handle it."

I received peace in this trial after realizing I should pray for God's will to be done ... for His will is good, acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2). Elliot also says, "God's Word is established forever, and He tells us in a thousand ways that His will is our peace. His choices for us will lead to fulfillment and joy. Do we suppose that we could find a better way than His?"

Listening to the Lord can be difficult in this trial. How does one know when it is the Lord speaking or just yourself? How does one know when to adopt or offer foster care? It's a *very* personal decision made between God and a husband and wife. I'm learning to listen to the Lord, trust and obey. This has drawn me closer to the Lord than ever before.

If you are experiencing a trial or this test of barrenness, I hope you will trust in the love and kindness of our Lord, knowing that He is working all things for the good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). Remember Hannah, and trust God.

Dahl, who is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., volunteers in a ministry at a women's prison. She and her husband, Ben, have been married for eight years.