



### WHAT YOU WISH FOR

BY PASTOR STEVE SNIPSTEAD

B

e careful what you wish for," cautions the old proverb. This is one of those expressions so old and well-used that only the first part rarely gets mentioned. The proverb actually has

a couple of endings. "Be careful what you wish for, you may get it," is the most common. These are words that any prospective lottery ticket buyer should carefully consider.

I like the variation by the German poet Goethe, "Beware of what you wish for in youth, because you will get it in middle life." As someone well into middle life, whatever it is I am supposed get, I should have gotten it by now. I find that curious. I love my life as it is, but as a young man I didn't wish for the things I now treasure most my family, friends, and a persistent and growing fascination with God.

I don't think Goethe was wrong, though; I think I had help getting to this point. Growing up in our church we learned to pray from the Lord's Prayer. The petition I've had the most discussions about over the years is, "Thy will be done." Discussions often went something like this: Does praying for the Lord's will mean you shouldn't make specific requests in your prayers or can you pray for God's will without knowing exactly what it is? When I was younger I often thought I was asking for what God wanted, but more often I was just wishing for my will. Fortunately, prayer has a safety switch.

Praying is better than wishing. Jesus explained why. "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent?" (Luke 11:11). Of course, no father would ever do that. Jesus encourages us to pray knowing that the answer is safely in our Father's will.

Sometimes God doesn't give us what we ask for, but He always gives what is best. When we pray we don't have to know exactly how God will answer. Praying isn't telling God what to do. The most important thing about prayer is that it connects us with God, and with that connection we can end up in places we never imagined.

That's what happened to me. God gave me what I really wanted and needed, even when I didn't know what that was. His will was better than anything I imagined. And the small faith that led me to pray, as blind as it was, put me in God's care. Verses like Ephesians 3:20 make that very point, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us."

If you need stronger evidence, look to the cross. God does His greatest work through the suffering of His son. When Jesus gave His life, a world was saved. Reflect on the way God brings beauty from something as brutal as the cross and it gets hard to doubt His will.

I still pray for what I think God wants and I hope I have a better idea of what that means. But I am not as concerned with the content of the prayer as with the quality of the conversation. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." This verse tells us that what we really desire, what will truly satisfy, is God Himself. It only makes sense, after all. God created us to have fellowship with Him, doing His will is what we were created for. It's what we wish for even when don't know it.

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### THE LUTHERAN **AMBASSADOR**

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Easter Day is the greatest of all Christian festivals for it proclaims the great truth upon which the Christian faith rests. Without Easter there would be no Christianity and no Christian church.

—Olle Nystedt

To live in the light of resurrection ... that is what Easter means.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The resurrection of Jesus is a sign of God's purpose and power to restore His creation to its full stature and integrity. Just as death could be seen as the culmination of all that is wrong with the world, so the resurrection can be seen as a pledge of God's ultimate victory over the disorder which plagues His creation on account of the fall.

—Alister McGrath

In the limbo between living and dying ... I hear those words: "I am the resurrection and the life," and feel myself to be carried along on a great tide of joy and peace.

—Malcolm Muggeridge

My sin and death hung about His neck on Good Friday, but on the day of Easter they had completely disappeared. This victory He has bestowed on me.

—Martin Luther

### BY KIRSTIE SCHIERKOLK

've done a lot of hoping in my almost-18 years. When I was very young, my highest hope was for a younger sister. After I got a bit older, I hoped that my friends' parents would get remarried. Lately, I've been hoping that our small church would get a believer boom and somehow break through the sinful bedrock of our town here in Mexico. These are good, even righteous things to hope for. Yet none of them have come to pass.

People had high hopes when Jesus came along, as well. After all, three cheers for a Messiah who could free them from the Romans and dish out bread and fish on command. But what started out as hope for the Jews soon became a barrier to their faith.

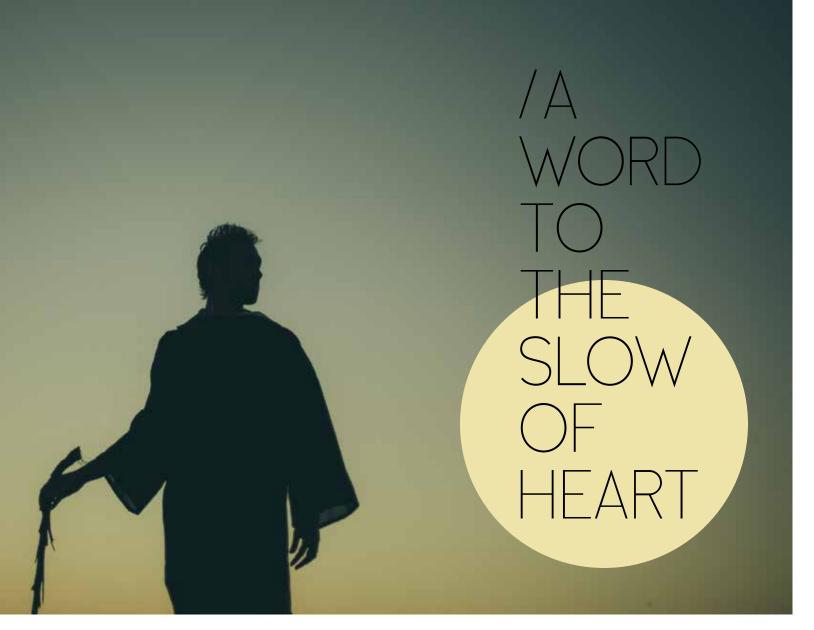
In Luke 24, we meet a couple of men on their way to a town called Emmaus, their minds reeling and their hearts heavy. It's been three days since Jesus' crucifixion, and they don't know what to think anymore. The man they thought was the Christ is dead, and any hope of freedom and salvation died with Him. "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel," they tell a fellow traveler on the road (v. 21).



That's a painfully familiar phrase. "We had hoped ..." Lose the ellipsis there and fill in your own dashed expectation. I know I can, both from my own life and the lives of those around me. I had hoped that the missionary life would have had fewer gauntlets and more glory. Bryan had hoped that since his dad was back, his parents might reconcile. Georgina had hoped that because she had prayed and prayed, her mom wouldn't die of cancer. Araceli and Leobardo had hoped that a heart surgery would save their daughter's life.

Jesus, that fellow traveler, says something a bit surprising in verses 25 and 26 of that same chapter. Instead of comforting or sympathizing with the mournful men, he rebukes them. "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

I find myself licking figurative wounds when I read that, imagining my own feelings if Christ said those words to me. Foolish, slow of heart—that sounds like it's for the Pharisees, not the faithful.



Unpacking Jesus words, however, puts everything into perspective. Though we may know and love God, very frequently we don't understand His actions—especially in the midst of suffering and confusion. But our problem is not so much in lack of understanding, as in lack of trust. I do not believe the Emmaus men were "slow of heart" because they failed to fully grasp God's plan of action. They were slow of heart because they failed to trust that God had a plan of action at all. They forgot the promise of the prophets. In their minds, Jesus' death was both literally and figuratively the fatal blow. Not only could they not see past it, they began to believe there was nothing past it.

J.R.R. Tolkien touches on this in his story *The Fellowship of the Ring.* There comes a tense moment when the fellowship deliberate whether to pass through the foul mines of Moria on their way to Mordor.

"I do not wish to enter Moria," Aragorn says, and the others agree.

Gandalf the wizard responds, "Of course not! Who would? But the question is: who will follow

me, if I lead you there?"

Later, once they are inside the mines, Aragorn encourages his fearful companions: "Do not be afraid! I have been with [Gandalf] on many a journey, if never on one so dark. ... He will not go astray. ... He has led us in here against our fears, but he will lead us out again, at whatever cost to himself."

The parallel is stark. Against our protests and despite our expectations, God leads each of us into dark and confusing places that leave us with a resounding "We had hoped ..."

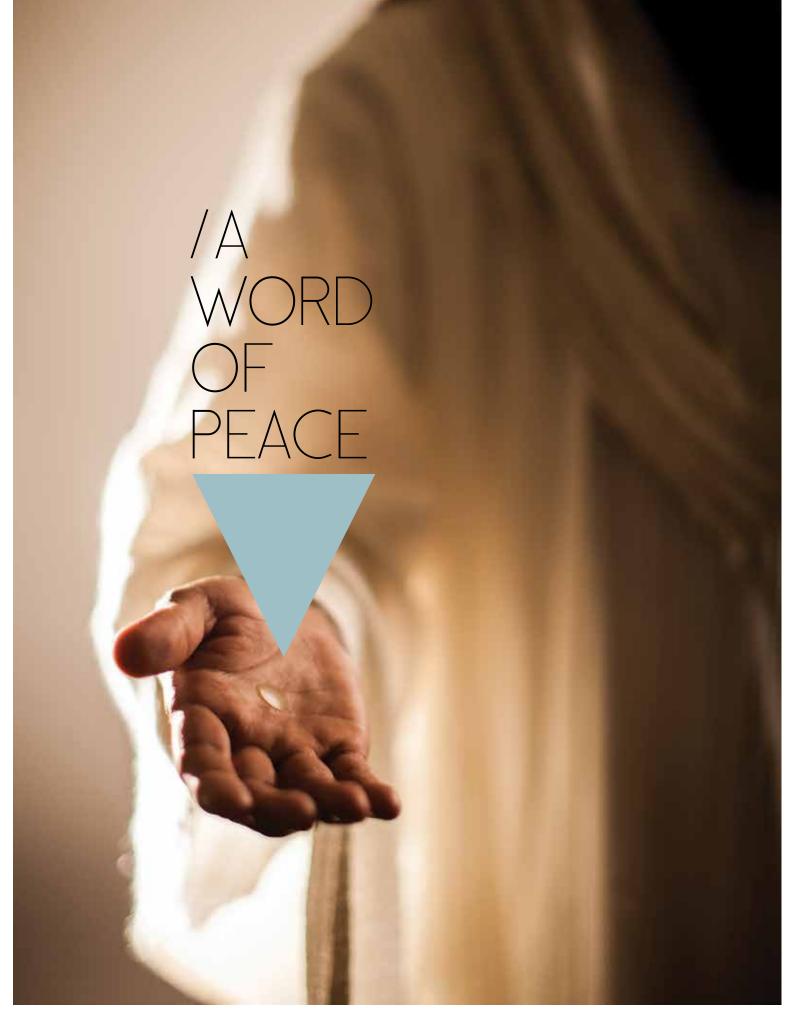
Regardless of God's promises, we continue to wish that we could enter our own glory without suffering. In fact, Jesus—in a non-sinful way wished the same. But He recognized that the glory could not be reached if He did not take the path that led to it. The resurrection could not happen unless He died. Through His suffering, He led us out of our darkness—at whatever cost to Himself.

We may never fully understand the reasons God allows us to suffer until we see our lives from the eternal perspective, as Christ did. But perhaps

when we do, we will be able to join Jesus in saying that our suffering was necessary, and we could not have found our glory without it.

Do not be slow of heart as you walk the path God has laid out for you. Be faithful and trusting of your guide, even when you don't understand what He's doing in your life. Listen to His Word and believe that there is always a purpose to your suffering. Give up your "I had hoped ..." and discover that you *have* hope. Take up your cross, follow Him, and find the way to glory.

Schierkolk, a senior in high school, is a missionary kid growing up in Jerez, Mexico, with her parents, Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk.



BY
PASTOF
ANDY

here does peace come from? What causes it? Does it arise from subjective feelings inside of us, triggered by good things around us? If we are

honest, each of us might admit that we sometimes base our peace on the subjective. Peace is the expected by-product of success. If my career is going well, I should have peace. If my family is intact, peace is expected. If I am a moral person, peace should follow. The list goes on and on. All of us, due to our sinful flesh, find it frustratingly easy to look for peace in the ever-changing and temporal activities that surround us each day. But does this really work?

What happens when trials abound? What happens when the conscience is stricken? What happens when we get past the façade and consider our fears and doubts? Can our careers, family, morality, money, and success really provide deep and lasting peace? Not really. Perhaps there could be an artificial peace, but how long does that last?

You see, any time a person looks for real peace from something which in itself is temporal, lasting peace is elusive. Something which is in its own essence temporal, can't reach into the soul and provide true and lasting peace. True peace must come from something which is eternal in nature. Something bigger than the now. True peace must come from something or *someone* who actually knows *why* real peace is so desired and yet lacking in the human soul, and who knows *how* to provide it to the broken-hearted.

Consider the scene that John records for us. "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (John 20:19-20).

In the hours and days following the crucifixion, the disciples were petrified. They were downcast, fearful, and confused. Peace? Unlikely! Suddenly, the very One who had just been executed on the cross stood before them. No knocking, just there. The disciples wonder, "Is this a dream? Is it a hallucination? Is it a vision of what we really wanted to see?" No. No. No. "Peace be

with you," is spoken to them. Now, if it was just a dream or a hallucination, those words would ultimately be robbed of any real meaning. However, to their amazement Jesus showed them His body. Evidence. The person standing before them was indeed the resurrected Christ.

Now, consider what Jesus said to them: "Peace be with you." Do you think there was a connection between the disciples seeing the evidence of the resurrected Christ and hearing those words? Absolutely. Do you think that those words of peace had a whole new meaning and experience for them? Most definitely.

It is not a coincidence that only after Jesus showed them his body, they were "overjoyed." An alive and real Jesus could only mean one thing: that everything He had said about Himself and salvation must be true. He was God. He was the eternal Christ. He had conquered sin, death, and the devil. Forgiveness of sins had been won. His righteousness was theirs.

His presence was the message. His presence was the guarantee. The dots were connected inside of the disciples' minds and hearts, and they were overjoyed and strengthened in their faith. True and lasting peace was given by God Himself and the disciples were instantly transformed. Filled with peace.

Filled with assurance. Filled with the knowledge of Christ crucified and risen for their sins. The rest of the story is history.

Friends, what we see recorded in the Gospel is a relevant encouragement for us. It reveals to us the source of true peace, as well as exposes our bankrupt tendency to look for temporal peace. We don't need to do this. We're not meant to. It doesn't work. It can't work.

Jesus knows our deepest sin problem. He knows our deepest fears and anxieties. He knows what prevents us from having true peace. He has watched our futile efforts to find peace. In the midst of this emotional minutia, Jesus is here. The crucified Jesus lives today, and His message has not changed. The same word Jesus gave to transform His fearful disciples into confident ambassadors is the same word He proclaims to you today.

Friends, you are invited to stop trusting in yourself, and place your trust in the crucified and risen Savior who announces to you, "Peace be with you." May the peace which comes from the certainty of Easter conquer your fears and fill you with true joy, true confidence in Christ, and true peace.

Coyle serves Shiloh Free Lutheran, Rapid City, S.D. BY OLSON

t was just last fall, a few months before Christmas, when I went through the very difficult time of losing someone so dear to me. I had never experienced the death of one as close to me before as I did with my dad. Even though I knew in the last months and few years before that his life on this earth would end soon because of his declining health, it still wasn't something I could totally prepare myself for.

I set out for a planned visit to Park River, N.D., to see my parents and also my sister who had planned a visit for a few days, as well. On the way, I received word that Dad had taken a turn for the worse. For most of 300 miles, I wept. Thoughts of, "Would I see him still alive or will he be gone by the time I get there?" were on my mind. Somehow, through my sobbing and blurry vision, I made it. Dad was still breathing, but resting peacefully.

For much of the next 24 hours or so, my mom, sister, and I were at Dad's side. We had a precious time of sharing Scripture with Dad, holding his hand, and loving on him one last time. There were also a few special moments when he had his eyes open. I know that as we expressed our love for him, he also responded with love in his eyes when he looked at us. Because of Dad's love for the Lord, we knew when he took his last breath that he was instantly in the presence of the Lord and Savior he served.

I can relate to Mary Magdalene even more now after experiencing this time of grieving, and can learn much from her. Mary had a close relationship with Jesus. She followed Him, supported His minis-



was there at the time of his death, most likely thinking about memories with Jesus. She may have been remembering how He had cast her demons out, how He forgave her, the lessons and stories Jesus taught, and how He loved people. As she was there in His dying moments, she probably saw the love in His eyes before He took His last breath, too. Jesus was very dear to Mary Magdalene and her sorrow must have been deep.

Mary showed her respect to Jesus at His death and now after His death as we read in John 20:1-8. She went to the tomb as soon as she could, as soon as Sabbath was gone, the first day of the week. Her sincere love for Jesus was shown by her



desire to take care of His body after His death. She took this opportunity to show respect by coming early in the morning, while it was still dark. I imagine her heart was heavy, maybe she couldn't sleep, tears rolling down her cheeks. Yet, she eagerly sought out Christ. This is a great example for me or anyone to seek Him industriously, early in the morning, before the day gets busy and we miss Him.

When Mary arrived at the tomb, she found the stone rolled away. This was the beginning of a glorious discovery; the Lord was risen! Although she didn't understand at first that this was what had happened. She thought someone had taken Jesus. So she ran to tell Peter and John. When they received her news, they immediately ran to the tomb. They discovered that the linen wrappings were folded and the face cloth was in a

separate place. This was proof that the body of Jesus had not been taken, but He had raised Himself, and they believed.

Mary would soon discover, as she spoke with a man she did not recognize, that her Lord had truly risen from the dead. Mary was the first to see the resurrected Lord, and all people someday will also see Him face to face. What a blessed hope for those who are grieving! First Thessalonians 4:13-14 says, "But we do not want you to be uninformed brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

Because of the victory over death through Christ's resurrection, the empty tomb gives all people the beautiful and glorious message of life. Those who have received Christ as their Lord and Savior will live in the presence of Jesus someday along with loved ones who have gone before to be with Him. Hallelujah! He is Risen!

Olson is a member of the Trinity Lutheran Parish, Golden Valley, Minn. Her father, Pastor Harvey Jackson, passed away on Sept. 28, 2015.

can relate to Thomas. I think if I had experienced the shock of seeing Jesus rejected by the crowds, put on trial, then slowly tortured until he was dead, then buried, I would have been skeptical when my fellow disciples told me that He had appeared to them alive while I was gone. "Is this some kind of cruel, sick joke?" I would have thought. I, too, would have demanded proof.

"So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe" (John 20:25).

Doubt is a common experience, even among the people of God. Our confidence in the reality of Jesus and His resurrection can be shaken. It can be shaken by simple skepticism that such an amazing thing could be true. It can be shaken by circumstances when our hopes are dashed, when tragedy strikes, and when our prayers aren't answered in the ways we had hoped. It can be shaken when skeptics claim that the Bible doesn't stand up to scientific and historical scrutiny, or claim, as many do today, that Jesus never existed.

Thomas isn't the only follower of Jesus in the Gospels who experienced doubt. Even John the Baptist, who had fearlessly preached repentance, prepared the way for the coming of Christ, and said of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who

### BY PASTOR MICHAEL PETFRSON

takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)—even he experienced doubt as he was facing imprisonment and impending death as a martyr.

We read about it in Matthew 11:2-6: "Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?' And Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

Notice how Jesus answered John. Jesus didn't point John back to his own works, or his own feelings, or even to his own faith. Jesus pointed out how He was fulfilling what was prophesied about the Messiah. John the Baptist, in his time of doubt, was pointed back to Jesus and His accomplishments. This is very important—Jesus gave concrete examples to John about what He had done.

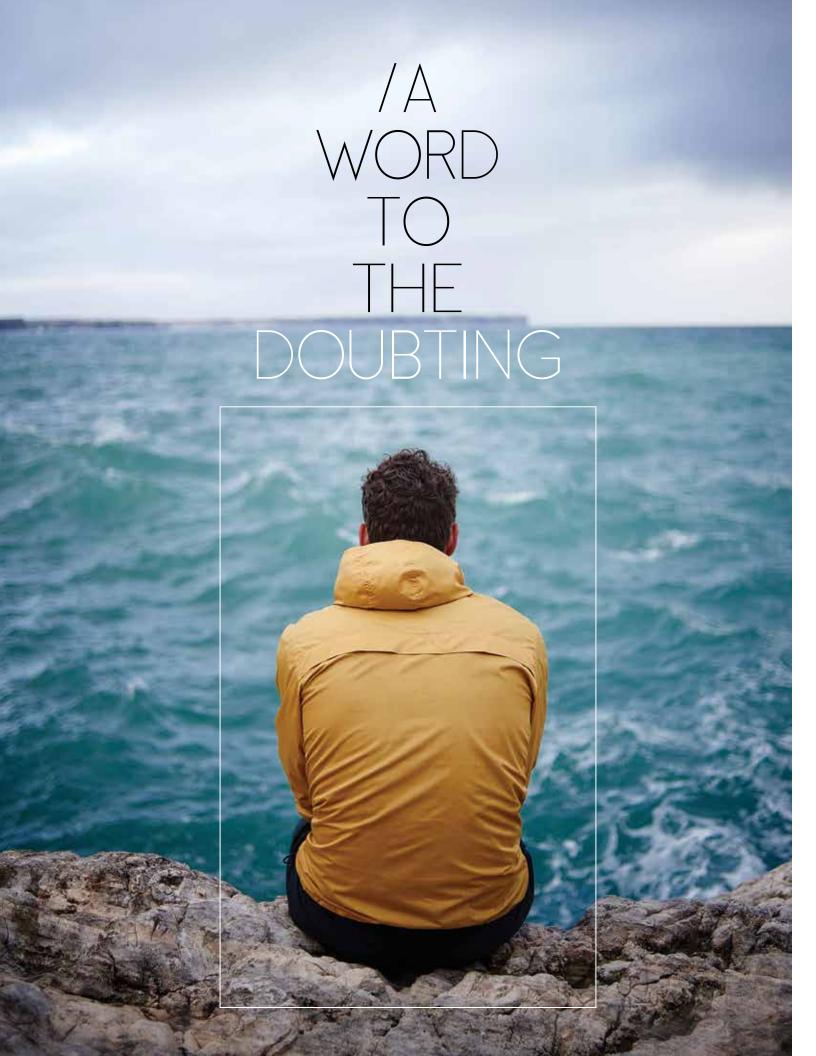
It is the same in Thomas' case. It's interesting to see that when the risen Jesus Christ did appear face to face with Thomas, Jesus gave him every piece of evidence he had asked for. We see this in John 20:26-27:

"Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe."

I love what Francis Schaeffer says about this episode in his book, *Whatever Happened To the Human Race*: "Is Jesus saying by this that believing is a blind leap of ungrounded faith? Quite the opposite! Because Thomas insisted on seeing and touching Jesus in His resurrected body, we have been given in the Gospels an even clearer evidence of the Resurrection than we would otherwise have had. But Jesus is saying that Thomas should have believed without this additional evidence, because the evidence available to Thomas before was in itself sufficient. In other words, before Thomas saw and heard Jesus in this way, he was in the same position as we are today. Both he at that time and we today have the same sufficient witness of those who have seen and heard and who have had the opportunity to touch the resurrected Christ."

When I experience doubt, I know that my only true source of assurance is to go back to Jesus and what He has done. The Lord works through His witnesses, and in the Bible we have reliable eyewitness accounts by those who saw Jesus face to face, both before and after He rose from the dead. The basis of our faith is neither in feelings nor abstract ideas, but in a person, Jesus Christ, in the truth of who He is and what He has really done. And when we doubt He invites us to find the basis of our faith and confidence in that which He has told us in His Word. We have the testimony of His eyewitnesses, just as we see in 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."

Peterson lives in Alexandria, Minn., where he is hospice chaplain at Knute Nelson



### BY PASTOR LUKE BERNTSON

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, Son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17).

o you love me? The question has been asked by many a hopeful heart, by many an anxious soul. Jesus asks this question knowing all things. Jesus knows if you love Him.

Let me share with you a little more of the story. On the night before Jesus asked these questions, Peter and some of the other disciples went fishing. They worked all night but caught nothing. At daybreak the resurrected but unrecognized Jesus stood on the shore and called out, "Children, do you have any fish? Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." When they cast their net out as instructed, they caught so many fish they could not haul it in. When Peter learned it was the Lord who had

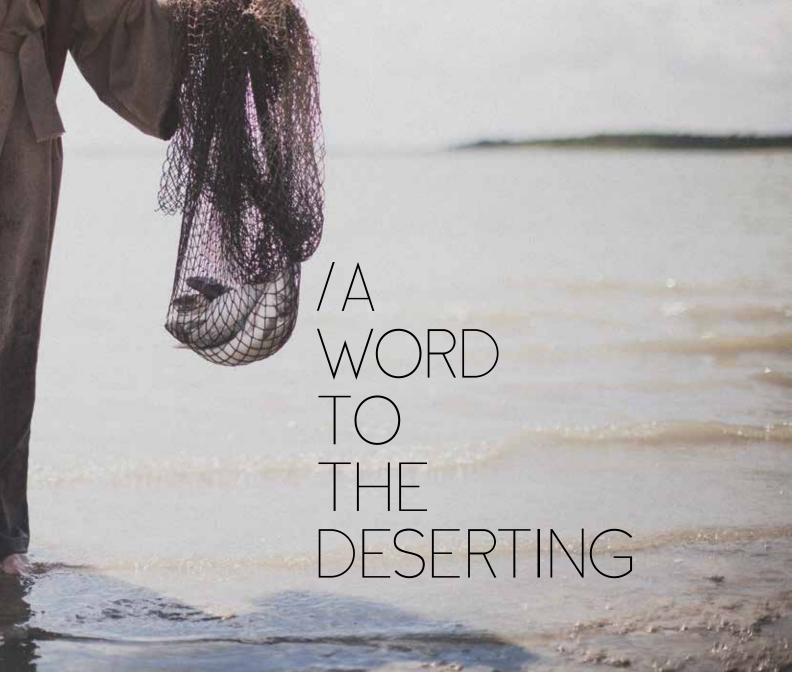


yelled out to them, he dove into the water and swam to Jesus.

When the rest got to shore they saw a charcoal fire with breakfast prepared. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have caught." At the word of his Lord, Peter brought in the full catch. Then, at Jesus' command, they sat and ate the meal He had prepared.

If you or I had been there we would have seen the love Jesus exhibited for His disciples. We would have heard His voice and smelled the aroma of fresh bread and fish on the fire. Yet the love of God for us is this—Jesus died for us. As Jesus served breakfast to His disciples, He did so as our crucified and risen Lord.

This was not the first time Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. He had already showed them His pierced hands and side. He had already eaten with them. But Jesus still had a special task to perform before returning to



His Father. He had a disciple to restore.

Before His crucifixion when Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter denied his Lord not once, not twice, but three times. On that night Peter's strength failed. His love for Jesus vanished. Fear drove out faith.

Sin is no abstraction. It involves a personal offense against Jesus. God's justice is no abstraction, either. Justice called for the personal sacrifice of Jesus. Forgiveness, then, is no abstraction. Forgiveness comes directly from the works and words of Jesus.

After His resurrection, behind locked doors and again by the shore, Jesus forgave and restored the one who had deserted Him. He redeemed Peter out of darkness with His own most precious blood.

On the shore after breakfast, Jesus addressed Peter's sin. Jesus asked His questions intentionally; He knew what He was doing. Although it

grieved Peter momentarily, this time of personal confession, forgiveness, and restoration removed any lingering doubt Peter may have entertained about his salvation or calling. Jesus was not content that Peter knew He had died for him. Jesus was not content that Peter knew He had risen. Jesus dealt with Peter's sin personally that He might personally forgive and restore him.

The forgiveness of Jesus did not end with Peter. Jesus made certain that the preaching of the gospel and forgiveness of sins would go forth to His disciples and from them to you. He said, "Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep." What does this mean? This means that Peter and the rest were to feed God's flock and guide them with the Word of God.

Jesus restored Peter for our sake that we might hear the gospel. Jesus loves us and made sure the good news would come to us.

If you, like Peter, are carrying the burden of

sin, you are invited to confess your sin to your pastor or another Christian you trust. Christ has sent him to feed you and shepherd you with the Word of God. You may also feed your child, your husband, or your friend with this same word of God. Do you love Jesus? I pray you do. I pray you will live and work with the joyful assurance of one whose sins are forgiven. And I pray you will eat and drink with Jesus when He returns on the last and final day.

Berntson serves Maranatha Free Lutheran, Ulen, Minn.

### BY RYAN EGAN

he history of art, in all of its forms, is vast and rich. So much so that it has, out of necessity, been divided into categories and sub-categories: music history, art history, Greek literature, Latin literature, English literature, and on and on. From there we

could divide out the sacred literature from the secular, the poetry from the prose. As the catalog of art is so grand, we might never discover gems of which we're even remotely aware.

One of these gems needs to find a more common place in the broader awareness of literature, especially as, on the eve of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we consider the history of the Lutheran Church from even beyond its beginnings in Germany.

The story of Hallgrimur Petursson— Lutheran pastor, poet, and literary figure of Iceland—is little-known to those of us out-

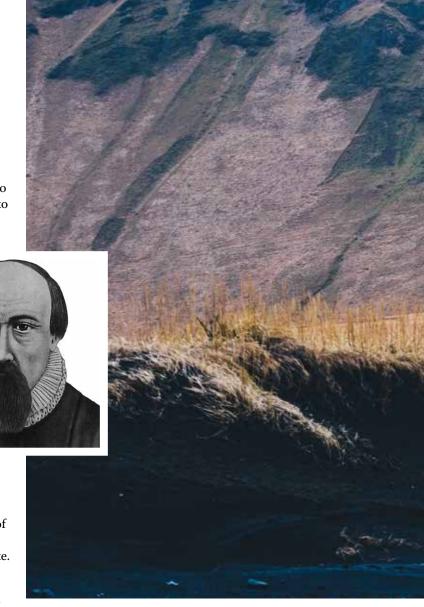
side the small island sitting just south of the Arctic circle. But Hallgrimur's story, however fascinating, is just a small part of the importance of his legacy. His *Hymns of the Passion* is a beloved work of Christian literature in Iceland. This wonderful collection of poetry based on the events of Passion Week should not go unnoticed, as well as the many other beautiful texts that Petursson wrote.

"The Hymns of the Passion were sung or read during Lent in every Icelandic home: one hymn each evening," writes Sigurbjorn Einarsson, Bishop of Iceland in 1978, in the introduction to *Hymns of the Passion.* "Today they are broadcast throughout Lent on the radio. Thus Hallgrimur has been the companion of every child of Iceland, from the cradle to the grave, for three centuries."

But what of the man himself? While we have explored just a few of the 50 hymns or poems included in his work throughout Lent (see *The Lutheran Ambassador's* facebook page), it always helps literature come alive when knowing the story of the author behind it. In this case, a story of adventure, human nature, hardship, and triumph.

Petursson's life began in the year 1614, born to a common farmer who was closely related to Gudbrandur Thorlaksson, Bishop of Holar (1572-1627). The bishop was very devoted to giving the common people God's Word in their tongue, encouraging poets to write. Petursson would work under Bishop Brynjolfur Sveinsson at Holar, but later leave to become an apprentice metal-worker. He then went on to school in Copenhagen and was prepared to finish his studies in 1636.

Here is where life for Petursson takes a very sharp turn. Historian C. Venn Pilcher, writes: "It was in the year 1627, the year of Bishop Gudbrandur's death, that four ships from North Africa, three of them being corsairs from Algiers, fell upon the defenseless coast of Iceland ... Between three and four hundred persons



were taken captives chiefly by the Algerians, and sold as slaves in the market at Algiers. Many suffered great cruelty, largely in the form of persecution for their faith" (*The Passion-Hymns of Iceland*, Introduction).

Einarsson writes, "Nine years later, 38 of these prisoners were released on the payment of ransom. When they reached Denmark and were waiting for a passage home to Iceland, it was thought proper that they should be given an instruction in the Christian faith." Petursson, having just finished his theological studies and being available in Copenhagen, is pushed into the situation and appointed to the task.

Venn Pilcher continues, "Among the captives was a lady, Gudrid by name, who by her beauty had already attracted the attention of the son of the Dey of Algiers. The young prince had even wished to marry her. This, of course, could not be tolerated, and the source of temptation was sent out of the country among the other ransomed slaves. Gudrid thus became a member of the group which was confided to the pastoral care of Hallgrimur Petursson. It was perhaps not unnatural that he in his turn should become a captive to those charms which had already proved too potent for the Algerian Prince. Such was the infatuation of the unfortunate man, that although Gudrid had been a married woman in Iceland before



the raid, and although, for all that was known to the contrary, her husband was still living there, Hallgrimur determined to leave Copenhagen and to sail back to Iceland with Gudrid."

And so, in this adventure of slaves, pirates, plundering, and prisoners we see the human nature found in all of us strong within our central character, so strong that temptation would be given into in this situation. "This conduct was the great blot upon Hallgrimur's life," continues Venn Pilcher. "He did not go unpunished. ... nor did his conscience keep silence. 'Lord, I have sown the seed of sin; Hideous have my transgressions been.' So he sings in one of his Passion hymns, and it has been thought that the words bear a special reference to this episode in his career. This sin may have been in a sense the beata culpa, which, with its attendant remorse, drove him to the Cross for that gift of pardon and renewal, of which he was afterwards to sing so peerlessly to his countryman."

Upon returning to Iceland, Gudrid and Petursson remained together and, after hearing of the husband's death, were married. This situation put an end to Petursson's studies, and he found himself now providing for himself and his household with casual labor and fishing—a hard life in every way.

Bishop Sveinsson, who had snatched Petursson from metalworking, never forgot his young student and offered him mercy

and grace in the form of ordination as priest at Hyalsnes. He served there for seven years, earning the "reputation as a clever and inspired preacher." Here, life seemed to settle, allowing him the opportunity to devote time to writing. "... it was here that, inspired by the example of Paul Gerhardt in Germany and of Kingo in Denmark, he achieved his greatest work in the composition of the immortal Passion-Hymns," writes Venn Pilcher.

Life would provide one more hardship for Petursson. "He contracted a disease which was not uncommon in Iceland during the 17th century: leprosy. The last years of his life were overshadowed by the sufferings brought by this disease ... On his deathbed he composed hymns of prayer that are a fitting swan-song for a poet of the faith," writes Einarsson.

So ends the life of one of the greatest and perhaps most interesting poets of Iceland, and one of the most little-known Lutheran hymn writers.

Egan is the director of worship and creative arts at Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D.



ou could feel the tension as Tim walked into the windowless basement of a

hotel in Istanbul, Turkey. Tim, the leader of unfoldingWord, had been contacted by a group of Iranian Christians asking if they could translate Open Bible Stories into Persian. Living in Iran had made traditional missions and translation efforts virtually impossible and meeting with Tim very dangerous. As Tim helped them begin translating, they wondered, "Could this be the answer to our need for biblical content in our language?"

Wycliffe Associates (wycliffeassociates.org) exists to help accelerate Bible translation. In recent years, ministry projects have begun to equip mother tongue translators to quickly make high quality translations of the Bible and other biblical content. One project they are working with is unfoldingWord.

The unfoldingWord project seeks to equip mother tongue translators with content, tools, and training in order to give them everything they need to translate, check, and publish biblical content.

unfoldingWord's flagship project is Open Bible Stories (openbiblestories.com)—50 key stories of the Bible, combined with 600 color images, available in text, audio, and video. This open-licensed, visual mini Bible gives a chronological overview of Scripture. Our team from Wycliffe Associates developed several companion resources which give historical, cultural, exegetical, and linguistic helps so the translator can make the best possible translation. We are currently working on making the Bible and its companion resources available.



### **EQUIPPING TRANSLATORS**

### BY PASTOR BEN JORE

The tools we provide start with a translation platform called translationStudio. This mobile app provides an easy-to-use workbench where the translation team can translate, check, and consult the companion resources. When ready, the translation is published online and on the unfolding-Word mobile app for easy distribution.

We also provide training in a course called translation Academy. Geared for mother tongue translators, this course not only covers translation and checking theory, but answers translation problems and provides a practical step-by-step methodology to help ensure high quality translations.

By empowering mother tongue translators with open-licensed content, tools, and training, we believe that biblical content can be available in every language of the world in the next nine years.

Tim had spent three days with his Iranian brothers, teaching them about translation, watching them struggle and learn, crying and laughing with them. In that time they had completed one Open Bible Story. Not only that, two members of the team had started translations into two other languages. Six weeks after returning to their homes, the Open Bible Stories translation into Persian had been completed. Shortly after that the

other two translations were completed, as well.

Now, by working through their underground church networks, there are 47 other languages in closed countries in Central Asia which either have been translated or are being translated into Open Bible Stories.



Jore is an AFLC missionary on loan to Wycliffe Associates, assigned to the unfoldingWord project as the Chief Content Officer. In 2014 he was commissioned as an AFLC missionary on loan to Distant Shores Media, working on the same project, doing the same job. He transferred to Wycliffe Associates in June 1, 2015.



## ILLUMINATE

BY PASTOR ERIC RASMUSSEN

will defeat the darkness.

Light is the very first thing God created in Genesis 1:3. The very last chapter in the Bible declares that "[Those in heaven] will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5, ESV). Of the New Testament authors, the Apostle John uses the term "light" more than any other. John declares that Jesus is the light that illuminates the darkness, giving light to all and promising the light of life to all who believe in His name.

Members of the 2017 FLY Committee have chosen "Illuminate" for the convention theme. with the theme verse of John 8:12. Jesus is, as this verse states, "the light of the world." Our prayer is that the students would encounter this light through the study of God's Word—that their lives would be illuminated by this light of the world.

Our culture recognizes that the ideas of light and darkness represent the struggle between good and evil. From movies to music to clothing to our everyday speech, we hear and see this struggle. In so many ways, the world we live in is a dark place. How do we navigate through the darkness? The

purpose of the theme "Illuminate" is to point to God who is light and to His Word, which acts as a light.

The Scriptures also use the word "light" in another distinct manner. Christians of all ages are called to be light. It's not just reflecting the light or merely imitating the light. The Scriptures make it clear that we are light. Ephesians 5:8 says, "... you were darkness, but now you are light" (emphasis added). As the students gather at the FLY Convention at the YMCA of the Rockies near Estes Park, Colo., in about 16 months, the sending call for them will be to "walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8b).

Please join with us in prayer for all of the youths in your life and all of those who will attend. We believe that God can and will do mighty things through His Word—from the salvation of lost souls to a mighty sending of many lights who will illuminate their communities for Jesus.

Rasmussen, president of the Free Lutheran Youth Committee, serves Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., as associate pastor.

and is more powerful than the darkness. He can and does and

But my 5-year-old son often complains about his room being too dark at night. His mom and I usually win the argument by pointing out that there are two

night-lights in his room plus light from the hallway. His room

that way to him.

powerful.

really isn't dark at all, but it feels

observable. It is energy. Light

magnetic radiation which travel

Throughout God's Word,

darkness and light are presented

as opposites. Darkness is anti-

God; it represents judgment and death. God is light; there

is no darkness in Him of any kind. And light always beats

darkness. Sometimes we have a hard time seeing the light, but

that doesn't negate it. The Bible

never considers darkness to be

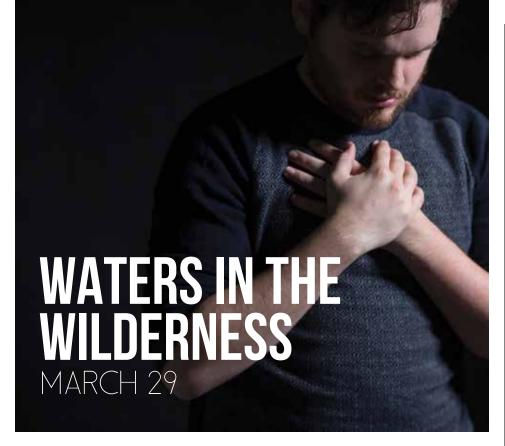
equal to the light. God is light

consists of waves of electro-

more than 186,000 miles per

second. Light is fast. Light is

Light, on the other hand, is something. It is quantifiable and



"Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, steal and profane the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:8-9).



nly God can teach a man to pray like this. Taught in God's school of prayer, this man exemplifies the true piety of a saint and reveals a penetrating spiritual insight. He has an eye single to God's glory; genuine prayer always has this spirit and purpose. He feels compelled to pray for grace because he fears his spiritual frailty will bring dishonor to his God.

The prayer, "Remove far from me falsehood and lies," may be a prayer both for pardon and for grace to face future temptations. In private prayer we, too, pray about specific temptations and sin in the areas of our own weaknesses. Divine blessings follow when we are honest with God in confession of sin.

He also asks God to provide for his daily needs. He does not desire superfluity, for then he may become proud and self-sufficient and deny God by forgetting his dependence upon Him. This is an ever-present danger for believers in our affluent society. Further, he asks to be kept from extreme poverty; such might lead to the temptation of dishonoring God through dishonesty or profanity.

When the child of God is assured that his heavenly Father is honored, he is content. Lord, teach us to pray and live.

Pastor Howard Kjos, Roslyn, S.D., was a member of the first graduating class of AFLTS. Now retired, he served congregations in Minnesota and South Dakota.

Waters in the Wilderness is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. "Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls," wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.

## Spring visit day set for AFLC Schools campus

The AFLC Schools will host a spring Friends of the Schools Visit Day on April 14 on the Plymouth, Minn., campus.

This one-day event aims to thank those who have expressed support and interest in the schools by providing an in-person look at the campus. Guests will be offered a tour and have opportunities to meet and talk with students, staff, faculty, and members of the Board of Trustees.

On Thursday morning, guests will arrive on campus and join students for the second- and third-hour classes at the Bible school and seminary and take in the chapel service at 11:10 a.m. Following chapel, guests will visit with staff and faculty over lunch, followed by a brief program led by Pastor Wade Mobley, president of the AFLC Schools and dean of the seminary.

For more information, contact Marilee Johnson at (763) 544-9501 or email marilee@ aflc.org.

### AFLC Schools hiring assistant director of maintenance

Administrators at the AFLC Schools are currently seeking an assistant director of maintenance. This year-round position involves performing and managing all maintenance-related issues on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn., thereby ensuring that the campus grounds, buildings, equipment are kept in top condition. The assistant director of maintenance will work under the director of maintenance.

The work week is Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or until daily work is completed. This position will at times require working Saturdays and occasionally Sundays throughout the year to assist with snow removal or other maintenance emergency duties. Salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience.

More information about this position can be found online at aflbs.org/employment-opportunities. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. If you feel you possess the desired qualifications, or some combination, please email your resume, statement of faith, and at least three references to Larry Myhrer at larrym@aflc.org or mail to: Association Free Lutheran Seminary and Bible School Attn: Larry Myhrer 3134 E Medicine Lake Blvd. Plymouth, MN 55441.



## THE REWARD OF SERVICE

BY DEBBIE GILES



hen I came to the United States in January of 2008, after spending most of 30 years in

Latin America, 23 of those years in Mexico, I wondered what my life would be like in this lovely country that seemed somewhat foreign to me. My life had consisted of raising my children, full-time service to the church, and being an integral part of Mexican society. I knew that Phoenix was where God wanted my family to be, but I felt a little hollow.

One of many blessings that God had waiting for us in this country was Calvary Free Lutheran Church in Mesa, Ariz., and one of the many blessings of being a part of that congre-

gation has been the ESL (English as a second language) program Pastor Al Monson asked me to begin. For the last five years or so, I have been teaching a group of Mexican women to speak English. We meet once a week at the church for a two-hour class. The church pays for an excellent Bible-based curriculum for the first two class levels and also provides each student with a bilingual Bible. There is no charge for the class.

It has been such a rewarding experience. These women are warm, kind, funny, and eager to learn. The biggest problem we have is that we speak too much Spanish; it's just so enjoyable for me to chat with these Mexican women.

It's obvious what I take from the ESL program—I have a bunch of new friends I enjoy hanging out with, the Mexican culture is still part of my life, they love to have parties and shower us with delicious Mexican food, and I feel like I still have a unique place in the Kingdom. But what have they gotten from five years of English classes? They have gone from shy, ner-

vous, and somewhat suspicious to active mem-

bers of the society around them. Because of their English classes, many have been able to find jobs and even start businesses. Some have gone for their green cards and two have acquired citizenship. This is huge, but the best change of all has been their slow, steady growth into warm, Biblebelieving Christians.

After five years of Bible-based lessons and two years of memorizing lengthy Bible passages, they now come into class sharing testimonies and praying for one another. I bet they have more of the Bible memorized than you do. (They definitely have more memorized than I do.) I am so thankful to the Lord, and to Pastor Monson, for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful ministry.

Giles, a longtime AFLC missionary to Mexico with her husband, Pastor Dan Giles, now lives in Phoenix, where she is a member of Calvary Free Lutheran Church.

## A new church in Switzerland

By Pastor Craig Johnson

he congregation I serve was founded in 1890 by Norwegian immigrants who came to Astoria, Ore., mostly because they heard about job opportunities in the fishing and logging industry. Worship services were in Norwegian for the first 30-some years of the congregation. The immigrants faced challenges and had much to learn as they adapted to their new country. Over time, and in spite of the warning from one church member that "No good will come of this," the congregation decided to conduct worship services and Bible studies in English in order to reach out to their community.

It is now 125 years later, but a similar immigrant experience is happening in Switzerland. Among the thousands of Brazilians who have migrated to Geneva for work opportunities are some from the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations in Brazil. As a result, a new congregation has begun in Geneva, pastored by Lay Pastor Augusto Fiuri, whose family has a long history of involvement in Free Lutheran churches in Brazil.

In January I traveled with AFLC missionaries Paul and Becky Abel to Geneva to teach and encourage the new congregation. We taught on topics such as the basics of Lutheranism, salvation through grace alone, and the background and principles of the AFLC.

The congregation presently rents space in a building near the center of Geneva. Their current meeting place is available on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. At other times they get together in homes. The cost of living in Geneva is quite high and rental space is at a premium.

Along with serving the congregation, Pastor Fiuri works a full-time job; he is married and the father to four children, all of whom are in school and living at home.

French is the language spoken in Geneva. It is the language the young people are learning in school and the adults are learning at their workplace. The congregation's services are presently in Portuguese, but some singing is already being done in French. The vision for the future is to make the transition to



French in order to reach more people in Geneva for Christ.

Geneva is famous in Reformation history as a place where John Calvin did much of his teaching. It is now home to an interesting museum about the Reformation as well as statues of some of the reformers. The good news of Jesus that the reformers proclaimed is now unknown to many in Geneva. The news wasn't passed down through all the generations, and it needs to be declared again. Pray for God's help and guidance for the new congregation as they seek to spread the good news. And pray for members of the AFLC World Missions



Pictured (above, from left) are pastors Paul Abel, Augusto Fiuri, and Craig Johnson.

TOP: Geneva, Switzerland, is home to a new AFLC church.

Committee and for AFLC Brazil as they seek direction from the Lord as to the best ways to help the new work.

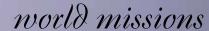


Photo by Josh Wagner

# Raans leave for work in India

Kenyon congregation hosts sending service on Jan. 31

Members of Hauge Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn. hosted a sending service for AFLC Missionaries Brent and Emily Raan, who have been called to mission work in Chirala, India. The AFLC has long had an established work there, including congregations, a school, and an orphanage. The Raans are the first AFLC missionaries there.



Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:28-31).

### BY JON NELSON



s I prepare for a summer of traveling and working with short term mission assistants

(STAs) as well as a mission team to Brazil, I keep this thought in mind: "They that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength ..." (Isaiah 40:31). This is true for each of us during our busy seasons of life, and it's an important reminder of the strength we have in our Lord.

During the Easter season I often think of Christ's disciples and the discouragement they must have felt following the crucifixion of their Lord. I won't ever fully understand this discouragement and heartache, but I have experienced discouragement. Often while serving in ministry, or on a foreign field, there are unique ways the enemy will attack—ways you may not fully understand at the time,



but you recognize the attack and cry out to God for strength, encouragement, and protection.

This can be a lesson we share with those traveling and serving with Journey Missions. Going on a mission trip or serving as an STA is exciting and a new experience, but it can at times also be busy and tiring. Those serving the Lord in a foreign and unfamiliar ministry are in a unique situation. Our goal in Journey Missions is to continue pointing people to Christ in the exciting times as well as in the weary times. It's easy to grow faint, but we serve a God who gives power as we are weak, and He renews our strength in those times of need. When we feel we are at our weakest is when God seems to show up in the biggest ways. It's best to stop looking to do things on our own strength and instead depend on His power in those moments. Then look to see how He will work in us and through us.

Please continue to pray for the Brazil mission team as they plan for this summer and for the Brazil mission team going in November 2016. Also pray for the STAs who are serving in various countries and those who will be serving this summer. It's truly wonderful to watch as families and congregations send an individual whom the Lord has called to serve in another culture. The



Lord has a plan for both the senders and goers, to move in their hearts in a mighty way. Thank you to those being faithful to send and to those being faithful to go.

My wife, Heidi, and I pray that those who serve and those who send would be encouraged thinking about how our righteous God will strengthen them as they boldly seek to fulfill God's perfect will for their lives.

Happy Easter. He is risen indeed.

Nelson, the department head of Journey Missions, is a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.



Pastor Joel Kangas was installed Jan. 10 at Resurrection Free Lutheran Church, Beltrami, Minn., with Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, president of the AFLC, officiating at the service.

### JANUARY MEMORIALS

### **AFLBS**

Ruth Claus Kenneth Jore

#### **AFLTS**

Enoch Thorsgard Pastor Erling Huglen Victor Ness

### Evangelism

Marie Jean Pederson

### Home Missions

**Ernest Nash** 

### **Parish Education**

Pastor Erling Huglen

### **WMF**

Alton Rustad Elvira Lokken Michael Perzinski Warren Dubbels Phyllis Peterson Dale Quanbeck

... in honor of

### **AFLTS**

Gloria Flaa

### PEOPLE & PLACES

**Pastor Steve Berntson** was installed February 14 at New Hope Lutheran, Jamestown, N.D., with Pastor Paul Nash, director of AFLC Home Missions, officiating.

A sending service will be held at 2 p.m. March 20 at Faith Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn., for **Josh and Ruthie Wagner**, missionaries with Lutheran Bible Translators. After being evacuated in 2014 due to the spreading Ebola virus, the Wagners will return to Sierra Leone on March 21 to head up the Themne translation project.

Pastor Timothy Skramstad has announced his resignation from Living Word Lutheran, Eagan, Minn., effective May 31, and plans to retire from full-time parish ministry.



### **In Memoriam**

**Anita Hort**, 94, of Brooten, Minn., died Jan. 28 in St. Cloud, Minn. She was the wife of the late Pastor Carl Hort.

Born Aug. 26, 1921, she was the daughter of Herbert and Marie (Simonson) Halverson. She attended the Lutheran Bible School in Minneapolis. She married Carl in 1963 and did mission work in Detroit before moving to Brooten in 1977, where he served Our Savior's Lutheran. He also served Crow Lake Lutheran in Belgrade and Sunberg Free Lutheran in Sunberg.

Anita was preceded in death by her husband. Surviving are one son, Andy (Wendy) Hort of Apple Valley; one daughter, Marie Hort of Plymouth: and one granddaughter.

The funeral service was held Feb. 2 at Trinity Lutheran, Brooten, with Pastor Ron Knutson officiating. Interment was in the Kenneth Lutheran Cemetery in Kenneth, Minn. Memorials are requested to the Sunburg Free Lutheran Women's Missions Federation and Brooten Senior citizens.

**Sylvia Molstre**, 104, of Fergus Falls, Minn., died Jan. 31 at Lake Region Healthcare in Fergus Falls. She was the wife of the late Pastor Harry Molstre and the mother of Pastor David Molstre and the grandmother of Pastor Mark Molstre and Pastor James Molstre.

Born Aug. 24, 1911, in Rochester, Minn., she was the daughter of John and Alvina (Eggler) Steiger. She attended grade school, high school and junior college in Rochester. She married Harry Molstre on June 3, 1939, in Rochester. She partnered with her husband, who served churches in Washington, Iowa, Wisconsin, Northern and Southern Minnesota, and North Dakota. In 1972, they moved to Fergus Falls where she worked in food service at the Broen Home for 13 years. She volunteered for the Senior Companion Program at Lake Region Hospital in Fergus Falls for 14 years. She was a member of Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls.

Surviving are three sons, Pastor David (Sandra) Molstre, Temecula, Calif., Paul (Judy) Molstre, Owatonna, Minn., and John (Joanne) Molstre, Moorhead, Minn.; 12 grandchildren; 33 great-grandchildren; and six great-great-grandchildren.

The service was held Feb. 13 at Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, with Pastor Jim Johnson officiating. Interment was in Oakwood Cemetery, Rochester.

### AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-January 31, 2016

	rec'd in January	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$31,829	\$31,829	\$32,777
Evangelism	11,483	11,483	12,004
Youth Ministries	6,935	6,935	6,412
Parish Education	10,093	10,093	15,553
Seminary	23,858	23,858	25,593
Bible School	37,876	37,876	28,479
Home Missions	57,351	57,351	56,901
World Missions	39,200	39,200	32,023
Personal Support	38,692	38,692	34,255
TOTALS	\$257,317	\$257,317	\$243,997

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

## IS IT ALL ABOUT ME?

onversation overheard in a parking lot: (Person #1) "Will I see you in church on Easter Sunday?" (Person #2) "No, I don't go for all this Easter business ... you know, the dying and rising again stuff." (Person #1) "Hey, that's only a metaphor. Easter is really all about you."

C.S. Lewis mentions something similar when he writes about hearing a man say, "The importance of the Resurrection is that it gives evidence of survival, evidence that the human personality survives death." Something of the human spirit will remain after the body dies. In other words, writes



Pastor Robert Lee

Lewis, in this man's opinion what happened to Christ is what happens to everyone.

But this is not what Christians believe—dating all the way back to the earliest years of the faith—no, it is something far more strange and in-

credible than a metaphor about a vague sort of spirit-survival. You may recall that the early Christians already believed in ghosts, and on at least one occasion after the resurrection they thought the risen Lord was one (Luke 24:37).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not the first resurrection from the dead. the Bible tells us. Elijah was used by God to raise the son of a widow from the dead (I Kings 17:17-24), and the prophet Elisha was God's instrument in the resurrection of the son of the Shunammite woman (II Kings 4:35). Scripture also tells of a man who was raised from the dead by touching Elisha's bones (II Kings 13:21)!

The ministry of Jesus includes several resurrections: the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:13-15), the daughter of Jairus (Matthew 9:25), and Lazarus (John 11:43-44). Graves were opened at the death of

Christ, and the bodies of many believers arose (Matthew 27:52-53). Luke records that there were resurrections occurring through the ministry of Peter (Acts 9:36-42) and Paul (Acts 20:9-12).

And all of these resurrections were not mere metaphors! People who died were alive again. John Updike wrote:

Let us not mock God with metaphor, analogy, sidestepping, transcendence; making of the event a parable, a sign painted in the

faded credulity of earlier ages: let us walk through the door.

Yes, let us walk through the door. He arose! The resurrection of Jesus Christ was not only another resurrection, as miraculous as that might be, it was the resurrection of resurrections, for it was the defeat of death itself. The Son of God, God incarnate, took on human flesh. "The Word became

flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth ..." (John 1:14). Death had no right to claim Him, yet He suffered and died. Thus the words of the prophets were fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' ... But thanks be to God! He

gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:54-57).

A fourth century sermon by John Chrysostom is still used in Orthodox churches on Easter: "O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen,

and life reigns."

It is good for the soul to journey by faith during the Lenten season and follow the way of the Cross, for there the price was paid for our sins, "not with silver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood, His innocent sufferings and death," we learned in the words of our catechisms. Yet it is the resurrection of Christ that the Apostle Paul highlights (I Corinthians 15), declaring that if He has not been raised, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins, and of all people we are the most to be pitied. "But now Christ has been raised from the death ... For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (20, 22). The late Dr. Iver Olson, our seminary dean for many years, once said that the words, "He is not here: He is risen," are God's amen to Christ's words, "It is finished."

All about you and me? No, Easter is all about Jesus! But, praise God, it is for you and me. And the words that He spoke to His

... it was the resurrection of resurrections, for it was the defeat of death itself.

> disciples are for you and me, too: "Because I live, you also shall live" (John 14:19b).

So, this Easter we hear again what He has done. Do we accept the clear words of Holy Scripture or do we deny them? The issue is more than whether or not we believe a story. Jesus Himself is the issue. What will you do with Him?

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

### something to share

## WHAT IS EASTER ANYWAY?

BY PEGGY BERGLUND



hat is Easter anyway? It's a strange question to be heard in a part of the country where the listings of Christian churches can fill several pages

in a phone book. The question was part of a conversation that took place between two young employees of a fast food restaurant. The manager approached the girls asking if they'd be willing to work on Easter. They were to get back to him with their answer.

After he left, one of the girls asked the other if Easter was on Saturday, to which the second replied, "Sunday, that's why it's called Easter Sunday."

"Oh," came the reply, "Well, what is Easter anyway?"

Her friend answered, "It's when Jesus was born isn't it—oh no, that's not right, that's Christmas." Having struggled long enough with the question, she concluded, "I guess we'll just celebrate the Easter Bunny."

The angel also had a question that first Easter morning: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). The grieving women came to the tomb to anoint the lifeless body of Jesus. His death, as they

saw it, was the end. Their dreams had been dashed, or so they thought. They came to His grave in sorrow, but left with the angel's news of life, news which has been reverberating around the world for more than 2,000 years. "He is risen! He is risen indeed."

That morning that we call the first Easter was a declaration of victory. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your victory? O Death where is your sting?" (I Corinthians 15:55). The grave could not keep Jesus. With His death, Jesus paid our penalty for us, and His resurrection proved Him to be the victorious conqueror.

Resurrection morning was a demonstration of power. It was a mighty power that rolled the stone away, a very large stone, according to the Gospel of Mark. It was the demonstration of power that the Lord God predicted in the Garden of Eden when He told the serpent, "He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). The empty tomb announced the defeat of Satan.

That glorious morning defined life for us who are the followers of Jesus. Romans 8:11 gives us the assurance that "If the

Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." His resurrection gives us the promise of new life while in our earthly bodies, and the promise of life everlasting with Him.

It is my prayer that the two young employees will come to learn that Easter is not about finding eggs and baskets; it's about being found by the One the tomb could not hide. It's not about chocolate rabbits; it's about the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world. It's not about new dresses and hats; it's about new life for today and into eternity for all who believe in our resurrected Savior and Lord.

A celebration of victory, power, and life. That's what Easter is all about.

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