

AMBASSADOR

Falsely
teaching the
true faith.



*Prosperity Gospel, Eastern Mysticism, the Emergent Church: these seductive false teachings are cropping up everywhere. Learn to discern the truth..

The



test

BY JOAN CULLER

You can't judge a book by its cover. Once, while on vacation, I stopped at one of those large book warehouses to buy something to read on the drive home. I chose a book with a Christian-sounding title and a cross in the publishers' logo. It certainly seemed safe. However, I was not very far into my new purchase when the author began railing against what he saw as the unfortunate tendency of Christians to focus on Christ's death on the cross. This writer found the crucifixion to be an event so depressing it should be ignored or avoided whenever possible.

You can't believe everything you hear. Another book was very popular and highly recommended, even by some pastors. Churches were using it in study groups. For a while everyone seemed to be talking about it. I borrowed it from the library and found it to be well-written and engaging. Imagine my shock when in one of the final chapters the author admitted he couldn't accept the resurrection!

You can't trust everyone you meet. On another occasion I was participating in an interdenominational gathering. The speaker, whom I knew casually and liked, discussed spiritual formation. She told us that we could assume anyone seeking spiritual guidance was "basically good." I approached her afterwards with a question. "What about original sin?" I asked. "Can we say anyone is basically good when we're all basically sinful?" She told me that many people preferred to speak of the "original blessing" instead of "original sin." She understood my theology, she just

didn't agree with it.

Now I am not saying we must avoid all books published by non-Lutheran publishing houses. Nor should we ignore advice given by our pastors or other mature Christians we have grown to trust.

There is also room in Christian circles

for a fairly wide variety of opinions that we might disagree with but do not label heresy. We can dialog with others without accepting all of their opinions. In fact, we may learn a lot from discussions with friends of other denominations and faiths. What we need is discernment. We need to understand the fundamentals of both Christianity and Lutheranism. Without those basics we can be easily led astray.

False teaching is still out there and it may look appealing. It may sound logical. You can't assume that because a book or an idea includes some Christian terminology, or is recommended by a Christian (even a pastor) that it's okay. The best solution is to know the Scriptures and Lutheran teachings for yourself. Ask your pastor to suggest a good study Bible and then study! Join an adult Sunday school class at your church. Read the Lutheran confessions (Concordia has a new presentation designed for use among the laity). Don't be afraid to ask questions and request the scriptural basis for the response you get. Learn to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

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The daily standards that you live by should not be relaxed in any way, yet you must deal gently with the faults of others. Learn to be lenient with the less important matters but maintain your firmness over that which is essential. Remember that true firmness is gentle, humble, and calm. A sharp tongue, a proud heart, and an iron hand have no place in God's work.

— Francois Fenelon

We take no pleasure in discord, nor are we indifferent to our danger; its extent is evident from the bitter hatred inflaming our opponents. But we cannot surrender truth that is so clear and necessary for the church.

— Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Preface

Peace if possible, but truth at any rate.

— Martin Luther

Only he is an orthodox teacher who not only presents all the articles of faith in accordance with Scripture, but also rightly distinguishes from each other the Law and the Gospel.

— C.F.W. Walther

Christ isn't enough.

By Pastor Scott McLaughlin



*Countering the Gnostic teaching that the sufficiency
of Christ is not enough.

Who do you say I am?" Jesus' question to His disciples, recorded in each of the Synoptic Gospels, is one which we too must answer: Who do we say Jesus is?

Trouble is, if we take our cues from the world in answering this question, we will find a bewildering variety of "real" Jesuses. Actual Web sites may be found that are dedicated to claiming that Jesus was, for instance, a woman; or that He was a space alien and buried in Japan; that He survived the crucifixion and is buried in Kashmir; that Jesus was a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Mormon, or a Gnostic. There are even Web sites that claim that Jesus never existed. Less outlandish but equally misguided are various modern attempts to reconstruct the "historical Jesus" by supposedly objective methods of historical research. A little book originally published in the 1930s by Henry Cadbury tried to warn about such vacuousness. Cadbury's book has a striking title for even today: *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*.

Holy Scripture is the only true source available to help us know who Jesus is. While all Scripture speaks of Christ and is fulfilled in Christ, the Apostle Paul's letter to the Christian community in Colossae contains some of the most memorable verses on the identity of Christ. Paul certainly had his hands full with a budding heresy in that community, circumstances which no doubt influenced his comprehensive focus on Christ's identity in that letter. Yet what matters for us today in regards to this particular heresy is not so much to throw some unpronounceable label on it, thinking that such categorizing pretty much covers it. More important it would be for us to understand the general drift of that false teaching and the way it may be present today.

So what is the essence of the false teaching that Paul heard about in Colossae? In a phrase, the heresy is this: *The sufficiency of Christ is not enough*. It is the false belief that there is a spiritual "something else" to be had beyond Christ, that there are other spiritual ways to access a deeper understanding and relationship with God.

In Colossians 1:15-20, Paul counters this diminution of Christ with a powerful proclamation of the unsurpassable preeminence of Christ. In this beautiful passage brimming with theological depth, Paul boldly confesses that nothing lies outside the scope of Jesus Christ — not concerning creation, not concerning the Church, and not concerning redemption.

Paul begins and ends the passage — as kind of confessional bookends — with a declaration of who Jesus is in relationship to God. "He is the image of the invisible God ... in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (vs. 15

and 19). Any Christological statement that tries to abridge Christ's full and complete divinity is an abridgement of truth. Paul is emphatic here: *all the fullness*, not just part of God's fullness, is embodied in Christ. In other words, Christ lacks not a smidgeon of God's nature. To believe that there is a spiritual "something else" to be had beyond Christ, or to think that Christ must be complimented by some other spiritual reality or practice, is to deny the truth about who Jesus is in relationship to God. Something to remember the next time some spiritual door-knockers come to your home.

As *the image of the invisible* God, Paul declares that Christ is "the firstborn of all creation" (v. 15). By itself, the word *firstborn* may seem to imply that, being created just as everything else, Christ is somewhat less than God who creates all things. Indeed, some who deny Christ's divinity often point to this phrase. However Paul's understanding of this word is made clear in the verses that follow. As elsewhere in Scripture (for instance, in reference to Israel and kings), *firstborn* also signifies preeminence and sovereignty. It is this meaning of *firstborn* that informs the following verses, and nothing is left out from Christ's sovereignty: "By him all things were created, in heaven and earth, visible and invisible ... all things were created through him and for him ... He is before all things and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." The cosmic scope of God's work in Christ is breathtaking! Only to one whom is fully divine could such claims be made. Paul is adamant in emphasizing the "allness" of Christ to counter those who only would claim the "someness" of Christ. To orthodox Christians, Christ is fundamental to



everything. Period.

Certainly Christ is fundamental to redemption, to the "re-creation of creation" made possible only in and through Him. And so Paul's last word in this amazing passage is quite appropriately the astonishing word of the Cross. Through Christ's death, God reconciles "all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (v. 20). Colossians 1:15-20 truly is a powerful witness to help us know who Jesus is. Its witness is sweeping, its impact upon receptive hearts and minds is transforming. So in the end we reject heresies like the one in Colossae not because they are radical or astonishing. Rather they are rejected because in truth they are not radical enough concerning Jesus Christ.

McLaughlin serves Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn.

A New spirituality. mysticism

By Pastor Dave Fruehauf



**Why we must be wary of mystical practices finding their way into the Church.*

Contemplative prayer, mantras, spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, the silence, sacred space, labyrinths, meditative techniques, mystical spirituality, the Cosmic Christ, centering prayer, *lectio divina*, Christ consciousness — new terms that reflect the mystical spirituality entering many churches, seminaries, Christian youth organizations and books sold by Christian bookstores.

Not many years ago, the conservative Church was warned about the emergence of the New Age movement. By the 1990s, most Christians forgot about the earlier ominous threat to the Church. Quietly, New Age spirituality permeated Western culture. It has now found its way into the Christian Church, where, in many churches, mystical meditative practices are used as a supplement to traditional preaching of the Word and worship.

These meditative techniques were introduced as ways to draw closer to God. By faithfully learning and practicing, one could actually reach the “inner light” and eventually hear God speaking in the mind in a personal way. This beguiling invitation brings eager participants!

Who wouldn't want to draw closer to God, and, after awhile, even hear Him speak directly through your mind?

But is it the Light of Christ that is seen? Is it the voice of the one true God that is heard? Are the physical sensations (some quite dramatic) the work of the Holy Spirit, or are these personal spiritual experiences the work of deceiving spirits?

The Church is warned: "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Timothy 4:1). And further, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

Identifying spiritual lies of those outside the Church is not so difficult. But when deceptions come from within the Church, especially by admired leaders, it is more difficult to discern the hidden lie or deception mixed with the truth.

Like changing the way one prays. Instead of speaking a prayer from the heart, sit quietly in *complete silence*. Let your thoughts drift away. Begin to repeat a word or short phrase in your mind over and over and over again until your mind seems to empty itself of all distractions and thoughts. The conscious mind is now in an altered state. Practicing this spiritual discipline, going deeper into the altered state of consciousness, will eventually lead to the "inner light" experience, to hearing a voice in the mind. The spiritual director will lead you. It may be a pastor or other leader in the church. This is "the silence" called contemplative prayer taken from ancient mysticism, first brought into the early Church by the desert fathers and practiced by Christian mystics throughout the centuries. Now, it has moved into the evangelical, mainline and Catholic Church bodies.

Do you see the deception in contemplative prayer? Does Scripture tell us to go into silence, let our thoughts drift away by repeating a word or phrase over and over until our consciousness is altered? The answer is absolutely *no*! Prayer is speaking to God and the Word of God is God speaking to us. Believers read and think about God's Word to understand the revelation He has given us about Himself and to find the instructions for living.

There is another purpose for bringing spiritual disciplines like contemplative prayer into the church. These techniques, used to contact spiritual beings, are practiced by other world religions. Some of these teachers and practitioners of mysticism in the church want to unite all religions (called interspirituality) on the common ground of mysticism for the purpose of ending all wars, bringing peace between nations and ushering in the golden age of prosperity.

Closely allied to this "second reformation" is the new church on the block, the Emerging Church. Sometimes called the Emergent Church, leaders of this movement wish to redefine the very fundamentals of historic, biblical Christianity. The Scriptures are not presented as the source of truth and the norm for Christian living. Rather, spiritual truth is subjective, coming out of inner spiritual and life experiences. A contemporary leader in the Emerging Church movement describes this new wave as people wanting to know God — not know about God — and wanting to experience the "beyond" in the "within."

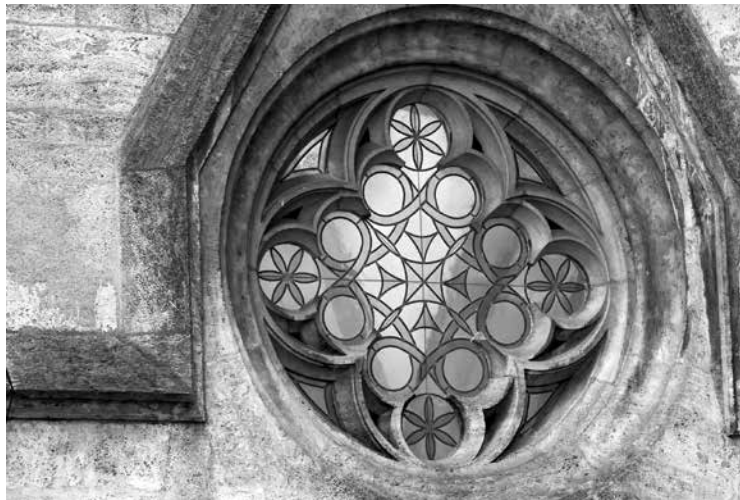
In the Emerging Church, experience is considered faith's most fundamental activity. This new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching. Mystical practices of meditation become the "sacraments" of the new church where each one arrives at his or her own personal truth. The Bible is then understood and interpreted from one's own viewpoint and spiritual experiences.

In this setting, doing "church" becomes an informal discussion between individuals sitting in a coffee house. The "pastor" moderates and may comment occasionally. Selected sections of Scripture might be discussed and interpreted by one's own "inner light" experiences. Faith is being exercised. There are no creeds or statements of faith. Each one is on a personal spiritual journey, ever changing and growing "deeper."

The truth is that Jesus Christ is the Word incarnate, "the Word become flesh" (John 1:14), not the ideal and example of a person on a mystical journey. He came as the divine Son of God to give His life as a sacrifice, atonement, for the sins of the world. Jesus told us that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). He said the Word of God is truth and that we are made holy by believing and following what it teaches (John 17:17).

In these last days before Christ's return, the Church was told that deceptions (truth mixed with lies) would come from *within the Church*. Search and know the Word of God. Christ has given the Holy Spirit to guide and keep us in the full truth of the Word (John 14:26). Some may depart, but Christ promised that the "gates of Hell will not overcome His church" (Matthew 16:18).

Fruehauf has a Master of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary and the master's in counseling psychology from the University of Minnesota. He is currently a part-time pastoral counselor in a Minneapolis church. He can be contacted at dcfruehauf@msn.com.



Are you discernment out there?

By Pastor Martin Horn



*When we should stand for the truth [and when we
should strive for unity].

By one estimate there are 20,000 different denominations and sects in the world, each one claiming the name “Christian,” and each one with its own distinctive set of doctrines and teachings that distinguish it from all the others. The Web site Wikipedia lists more than 600 groups ranging from the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church to the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, and this is only a sampling of the total.

Are all of these groups Christian? If not, what standards do we use to evaluate them? When do we embrace them as brothers in Christ, and when do we say, “We respect your right to your own beliefs, but we cannot recognize these beliefs as Christian.”

This question came into the public arena in the last year with the candidacy of a Mormon for president of the United States. When asked about his faith, Mitt Romney would reply simply, “Jesus Christ is my personal Savior.”

In an age of tolerance, Christians felt pressured to be as accepting and non-judgmental as Joel Osteen, pastor of what is known as the “largest church in America.” Appearing on FOX News, Osteen was asked, “Is a Mormon a true Christian?” He answered, “Well, in my mind they are. Mitt Romney has said that he believes in Christ as his Savior, and that’s what I believe, so, you know, I’m not the one to judge the little details of it. So I believe they are.”

Many Christians could not turn a blind eye to the fact that the teaching of the Mormon Church directly contradicts a bedrock doctrine of the Christian Church. Elder Jeffrey Holland, one of the 12 “Apostles” of the Mormon Church, pleads that his Mormon faith be accepted as Christian: “I am deeply hurt when I am called anything but Christian.” But then, in an article titled in part, “The Only True God,” he explains the Mormon doctrine of God: “We declare it is self-evident from the Scriptures that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are separate persons, three divine beings. ... I think that it is accurate to say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable except believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the Scriptures because it is not true.”

There are times when Christians must politely and firmly say no. We respect your right to believe what you believe, but we cannot accept you as a fellow brother in Christ. There are bedrock doctrines that are foundational to faith, and when an individual or church body denies these, they are outside historic and biblical Christianity. Two of these doctrines are the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. The Athanasian Creed, after

defending these doctrines against false teachers, concludes: “This is the true Christian faith. Unless a man believe this firmly and faithfully, he cannot be saved.”

Christians cannot give in to the post-modern tolerance in all things. There are issues and doctrines that do divide. And we must be willing to stand firm when standing firm is demanded. But Christians cannot afford to indulge in a spirit that finds every disagreement worth fighting over.

There is an apocryphal story that somewhere down south in a small town there are two almost identical churches standing side-by-side. One is named “The Bible Church of the Left Foot” and the other, you guessed it, “The Bible Church of the Right Foot.” The church practiced foot washing as an ordinance, but split over which foot to wash first, the right or the left.

There are times when we must stand for truth. However, we must also recognize that division is not always the result of a concern for truth, but is sometimes only a symptom of the flesh and human pride. Differences between Christians must always be approached with humility and grace.

There is one last area to explore. What about Christian denominations that agree on the fundamental doctrines but have real differences in other, secondary, areas? What do we do with disagreements over baptism, or the Lord’s Supper, or church polity? Some Lutheran groups will not fellowship with other Christians that do not agree with them on every point of doctrine. On the other hand the AFLC has declared in its Fundamental Principles: “Every free congregation, as well as every individual believer, is constrained by the Spirit of God and by the privileges of Christian love to do good and to work for the salvation of souls and the quickening of spiritual life, as far as its abilities and power permit. Such free spiritual activity is limited neither

by parish nor by synodical bounds” (F.P. 12).

The question is, in spite of the differences that divide, is salvation through Christ still proclaimed through the preaching and teaching of the Word? If so, we may recognize the very real disagreements and yet also be able to say, “You are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we can fellowship in Christ and even cooperate with you in ministry when the situation demands.”

If there is agreement on the essentials we can have unity in Christ. If the difference is of a very minor nature we should try to not be disagreeable or divisive. And on the crucial doctrines of the faith we stand firm on the truth of God’s Word.

Horn serves the Kenyon, Minn., congregations of Emmanuel Lutheran and Hauge Lutheran.



Licence for spirituality.

By Ben Jore



*An eternal perspective on God's plan to bless those who follow His will.

You have a car, but it's not the car you want!" the televangelist yelled. "You have a house, but it's not the house you want! You have a wife but she's not the wife you want! In John 15:7 Jesus says, 'You can ask anything you *want* and it will be given to you!' What do you want today?" The crowd was nearing a frenzy as he continued. I shook my head in disbelief and disgust as I changed the channel. Was this really the gospel of Christ?

This "sermon" I recently heard espouses a false doctrine that has permeated much of the Christian world today — commonly called Prosperity Gospel (also Health and Wealth, Name It Claim It, and Word of Faith).

This false doctrine has been built on two pillars of error. First, it states that God wants every Christian to be abundantly prosperous in every area of life. This includes financial success, perfect health, and virtually anything else that would define "prosperity" or "success." It says that if a Christian gives to the church until he can't give any more and believes with his entire mind and soul that it will happen, he can have anything and everything he wants. It also states that every sickness is from the devil, and therefore, no Christian should ever get sick. Happiness, it states, is God's ultimate goal for His people.

The second pillar of error on which Prosperity Gospel is built is the belief that the means of obtaining these wall-to-wall blessings is by releasing faith through verbally asserting and claiming them. Joel Osteen, known as the "Prosperity Gospel's Coverboy," explained it this way: "It's not enough to just read it; it's not enough to just believe it. You've got to speak it out. Your words have creative power. And one of the primary ways we release our faith is through our words. And there is a divine connection between you declaring God's favor and you seeing God's favor manifest in your life. ... You've got to give life to your faith by speaking it out" (*The Christian Sentinel*, June 2003).

Prosperity Gospel churches are springing up all over the globe, and hundreds of thousands of people are coming forward to accept Christ every year in hopes that, as promised, all their dreams of prosperity will come true. Even many mainstream Christians have begun asking themselves, "Is Prosperity Gospel really a false doctrine? After all, they quote the Bible, believe in Jesus, and claim to be Christian."

Pastor John Piper, author and pastor of Bethlehem Baptist, Minneapolis, put it best when he said of Prosperity Gospel, "That's idolatry, that's not the gospel!" (John Piper on Prosperity Gospel, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukeVxtU3hc>). He is absolutely right! Prosperity Gospel has changed the truths of the gospel into a license to gratify one's desires. It has clothed sins such as the love of money

(I Timothy 6:10), greed (Luke 12:15), covetousness (Romans 7:8), and discontentment (I Timothy 6:6) with the cloak of religiosity. It has changed the biblical promises of suffering (II Timothy 3:12) and trials (I Thessalonians 3:3-4) into a vain hope of heaven's blessings on earth. It has replaced the denial of self (Mark 8:34) with the gratification of self. It has redefined faith from a submissive trust in God into a force that can be manipulated for personal gain. It has tried to create a reality that does not exist, tried to validate that reality with dramatic signs and wonders, and in the end has only succeeded in eroding God's credibility. It has placed faith above God, the gifts above the Giver, health above the Healer, the present above the future, and the physical above the spiritual. Truly, this is idolatry.

What makes any false teaching dangerous is how it takes genuine, biblical truth and perverts it, often by adding to it or taking from it. Even Prosperity Gospel uses some biblical truth, which we must be sure not to disregard. God does want to bless and heal His people, but this is not an end in itself. His ultimate goal is that His name would be glorified as we grow in love for Him and conform to the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). If health and wealth distract us from this, God will likely not give them to us.

It is true our words are significant (Matthew 12:36, James 3:6). However, the power of our words is only realized as we remain within our Father's will.

In fact, James 4:3 promises that we can be sure we will not get what we ask for when we are asking it for ourselves.

In the Old Testament, Moses had it all. He was a part of the ruling family of the greatest empire on earth, undoubtedly possessed great wealth, and yet "he chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward" (Hebrews 11:25-26).

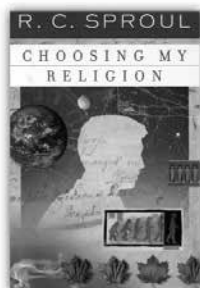
Moses is a hero of faith, but it is not because he was healthy, wealthy, prosperous, drove a Hummer, had a multi-million-dollar ministry, or flew in his own private jet. It is because he had an eternal perspective like few have ever had. Let us, like Moses, not seek the riches, glory, and comfort that this world can give. But let us "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

Jore is serving as a short-term missionary in Mbulu, Tanzania.



resources

For more information on these resources, contact Parish Education at (763) 545-5631 or e-mail parished@aflc.org.



Choosing My Religion

Why am I here on earth? Are there many paths to God or only one? Is there absolute truth? What do you believe in? Whatever it is, that is your religion.

Targeted to teenagers and young adults, this short book uses comments from students as the springboard for each topic and seeks sound answers to life's big questions. A valuable resource for youth ministers and teachers who work with high school and college students. Includes discussion questions with each chapter. \$9

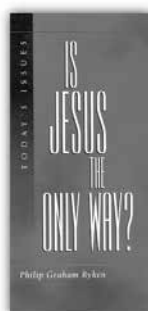
The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error

Contrasts seven biblical truths with the teachings of Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Eastern Mysticism, and others. Foldout pamphlet. \$1.50



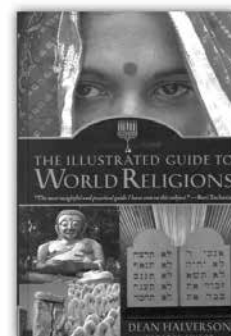
Christianity, Cults & Religions

PowerPoint presentation compares the beliefs of 19 world religions and cults with biblical Christianity. Printable worksheets included. \$39.95 Also available: foldout pamphlet \$3.95, Spanish pamphlet \$2.95, laminated wall chart \$12.50



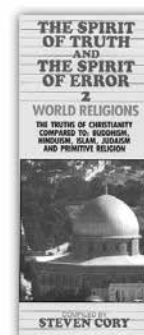
Is Jesus the Only Way?

"Can't I pray to the god of my choice? How can you claim there's only one way to heaven? What right do you have to say that other religions are false?" Such questions have become common, and this booklet outlines four essential Christian beliefs that pluralists find most troublesome and explains them in clear, everyday terms, proving how and why Jesus is the only way. \$4.95



The Illustrated Guide to World Religions

Presents the origins, basic beliefs, and evangelistic opportunities of the world's religions in a colorful graphic format. Prepares Christians to answer the questions, "Is Jesus the only way to God?" and "How can we know the Bible is the Word of God?" Ideal for teachers, pastors, and lay Christians who want to witness to their friends and colleagues. \$18 Also available: "The Compact Guide to World Religions" \$10.50



The Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error: World Religions

Compares the truths of Christianity to Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and primitive religion. A helpful tool to answer questions about other religious beliefs. Foldout pamphlet. \$1.50

2008 annual conference WELCOME



In just a few weeks many of us will be making our way from the north, south, east and west to Oklahoma City, the capitol city of the state of Oklahoma and the county seat of Oklahoma County. The metro area has an estimated population of about 1.2 million people. As I

think about the time we as people of the AFLC will spend there from June 10 to 13, I am praying that we will make a significant impact upon that city.

We may not be so many in a city that large, but certainly our testimony should bear a positive influence as we have opportunity to interact with the people we meet. We are thankful to First Lutheran of Oklahoma City and Faith

Lutheran of Durant, Okla., for hosting the 46th annual conference of the AFLC. Pastors Gerald Peterson and Craig Scavo, together with their congregations, are busy these days preparing for our time there in Oklahoma City.

We will gather this year under the theme: "From Him, Through Him, To Him" from Romans 11:36. It is absolutely amazing that the Sovereign God of this universe is preparing for our time in Oklahoma City. The triune God has an agenda for those days, and it includes each one of us. From our experience in years past we know that He works in and through the times spent

in the Word, in prayer, in fellowship, and in the business sessions to accomplish His purposes for us.

In our staff devotional times here on the Plymouth, Minn., campus we have been asking Him to visit us in a new and fresh way with a spirit of revival in

preparation for the conference. As we take note of the society of which we are a part and to which we have been sent with the message of life, we are reminded of how much we as His children need to be renewed and revived in our walk and relationship with Him. Please pray with us that our heavenly Father would visit us and prepare us in special ways for the conference and the days to follow.

Wouldn't it be great to have every congregation in the AFLC represented at the conference? Let me encourage you to so think and plan. We do not operate with a delegate system, so every member of an AFLC congregation is invited and encouraged to attend, and to do so with speaking and voting privileges. I want to extend a special invitation to the people of those congregations that have in recent months become a part of the AFLC. It will be a wonderful opportunity for us to meet and get better acquainted. In this issue you will find conference information regarding the agenda, registration, housing, the WMF convention, and childcare.

It is my privilege to welcome you and encourage you to attend the annual conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

Nelson, Rockford, Minn., is president of the AFLC.



Pastor Elden Nelson

conference AGENDA

St. Luke's United Methodist, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Tuesday, June 10

9:00 a.m.

The conference committees meet for devotions, instructions and room assignments.

7:30 p.m.

The opening service of the conference with Communion.
Leader: Pastor Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Speaker: Pastor David Skordahl, St. Michael, Minn.
AFLC President Pastor Elden Nelson will open the conference and appoint necessary committees.

Wednesday, June 11

9:00 a.m.

Devotions
Report of the Credentials Committee
Adoption of the Conference Agenda
Election of the Nominating Committee for the 2009 Conference
The President's Report
Report of the Chairman of the Coordinating Committee
Pastor Kenneth Moland, Kirkland, Wash.
Report of the Chairman of the AFLC Foundation
Pastor Tonnes Pollestad, Andover, Minn.
Reports of Chaplaincy Ministries
Institutional: Pastor Kerwin Sletto, Ottawa, Ill.
Military: Pastor Tim Skramstad, Eagan, Minn.
Report of the Director of the ARC
Pat Flanders, Osceola, Wis.
AFLC Financial Report
Cory Buck, New Hope, Minn.
Report of the Family Bible Camps
* Lake Bronson — Treasurer, Sonia Balmer, Thief River Falls, Minn.
* Wilderness — Treasurer, Jon Dryburgh, Grafton, N.D.
Report of the Budget Analysis Committee
Nathaniel Olson, Argusville, N.D.
Report of the Budget Analysis Review Committee
Cory Buck, New Hope, Minn.
Report of the Nominating Committee, always in order
Election of nominees for the Missions, Schools & ARC Corporations

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour — Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.

Noon

Builder's Fellowship Lunch

Chaplains Lunch

1:30 p.m.

Devotions
Report of Credentials Committee
Election Procedures
Elections
* Vice President — one-year term
* Secretary — one-year term
Selection of nominees to the
Home Missions Committee — two layman;
FLAPS Board of Managers — one layman;
World Missions Committee — one pastor, one layman;
Board of Trustees — two pastors, one layman;
ARC Board — one layman, one pastor
Report of Committee No. 1 (Administration)
Election of nominees to the Coordinating Committee — one pastor and one layman
Election of Committee No. 1 for the 2009 Conference

5:30 p.m.

Schools Corporation Annual Meeting

7:00 p.m.

The Mission Festival Service conducted
by the Women's Missionary Federation
Speaker: Dr. Lyle Mattson, Greenbush, Minn.

Thursday June 12

7:00 a.m.

Missions Corporation Annual Meeting

9:00 a.m.

Devotions
Report of the Credentials Committee
Report of the Chairman of the Stewardship Board,
Pastor Greg Schram, Thief River Falls, Minn.
Report of the Chairman of the Board of Pensions,
Pastor Larry Haagenson, Loveland, Colo.

Report of Committee No. 5 (Stewardship & Pensions)
 Election of members to the Stewardship Board — one pastor
 Election of member to the Board of Pensions — one layman
 Election of Committee No. 5 for the 2009 Conference

Report of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees,
 Dr. Dan Mundfrom, Greeley, Colo.

Report of the Dean of the Seminary,
 Dr. Francis Monseth, Rogers, Minn.

Report of the Dean of the Bible School,
 Pastor Joel Rolf, Plymouth, Minn.

Report of Committee No. 2 (Schools)

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour — Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.

Noon

The ARC Corporation Annual Meeting
 Partners in Mission Outreach Annual Meeting

1:30 p.m.

Devotions
 Report of the Credentials Committee
 Continuing discussion of Committee No. 2
 Election of Committee No. 2 for the 2009 Conference
 Report of the Schools' Corporation annual meeting
 Report of the Chairman of the World Missions Committee,
 Tom Caouette, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
 Report of the Director of World Missions,
 Pastor Del Palmer, Shakopee, Minn.
 Report of Partners in Mission Outreach Board President,
 Kenneth Sletten, Duluth, Minn.
 Report of the Chairman of the Home Missions Committee,
 Pastor Richard Long, Arlington, Wash.
 Report of the Director of Home Missions,
 Pastor Paul Nash, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
 Report of FLAPS Executive Director,
 Lavon Bohling, Golden Valley, Minn.
 Report of WMF President,
 Lorilee Mundfrom, Eugene, Ore.
 Report of the Chairman of the Commission on Evangelism,
 Gene Quist, Bloomington, Minn.
 Report of the Director of Evangelism,
 Pastor James Rasmussen, Maple Grove, Minn.

5:30 p.m.

Pastors' Banquet

7:00 p.m.

Laymen's Service
 Leader: Kenneth Blood, Oklahoma City, Okla.
 Speaker: Dean Hobelmann, Republic, Kan.

Friday, June 13

9:00 a.m.

Devotions
 Report of the Credentials Committee
 Report of Committee No. 3 (Missions and Evangelism)
 Report of Missions Corporation Annual Meeting
 Election of member to the Commission on Evangelism
 — one layman
 Election of Committee No. 3 for the 2009 Conference
 Report of the Chairman of the Board of Publications
 and Parish Education, Pastor John Mundfrom, Eugene, Ore.
 Report of the Director of Parish Education,
 Marian Christopherson, Crystal, Minn.

11:30 a.m.

Prayer Hour — Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.

Noon

Lunch

1:30 p.m.

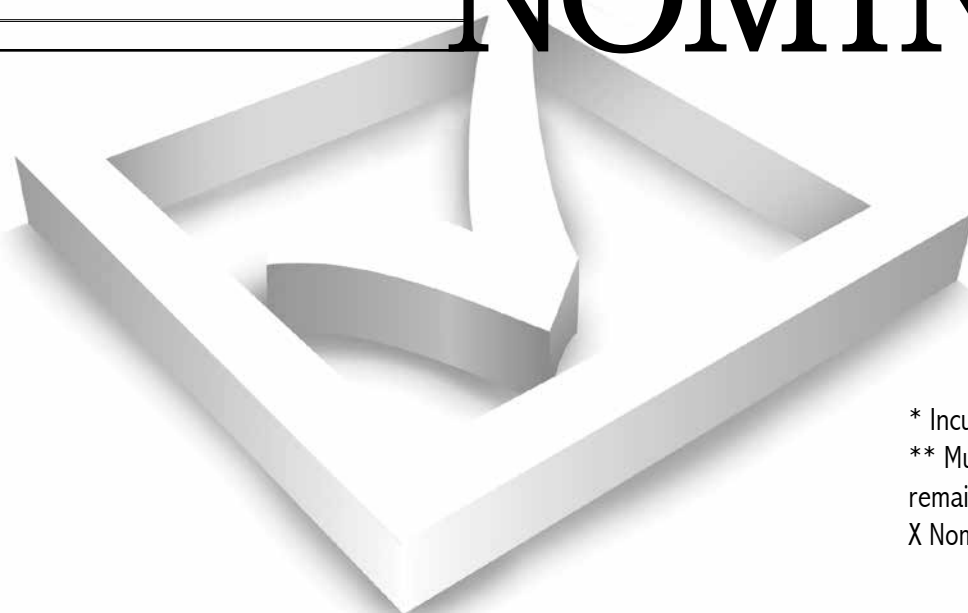
Devotions
 Report of the Credentials Committee
 Report of the Chairman of the Youth Board,
 Eric Christenson, Amery, Wis.
 Report of the President of the Free Lutheran Youth,
 Daniel Keinanen, Onalaska, Wis.
 Report of Youth Ministries Director,
 Pastor Jason Holt, St. Michael, Minn.
 Report of Committee No. 4
 (Publications, Parish Education and Youth Work)
 Election of member to the Board of Publications
 and Parish Education — one layman
 Election of member to the Youth Board — one layman
 Election of Committee No. 4 for the 2009 Conference
 Report of the Chairman of the Colloquy Committee,
 Pastor Steve Mundfrom, Arlington, S.D.
 Election of Colloquy Committee for the 2009 Conference
 Report of special committees
 Election of two members to the Budget Analysis Committee
 Report of Committee No. 1 as the Committee on General
 Resolutions
 Other Reports

7:30 p.m.

Closing service with ordinations

Conference Committee
 Pastor Elden Nelson, President
 Pastor Brian Davidson, Secretary

2008 conference NOMINEES



* Incumbents

** Must be re-elected to corporation to remain on committee or board

X Nominations not named by press deadline

Coordinating Committee

(One layman, four-year term)

Mel Fischer, Shakopee, Minn.

Dennis Holman, Minneapolis, Minn.

(One pastor, five-year term)

Pastor Greg Schram, Thief River Falls, Minn.

Pastor Tim Skramstad, Eagan, Minn.

AFLC Schools Board of Trustees

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)

* Pastor Dana Coyle, Ottawa, Ill.

X

(One pastor, three-year term)

* Pastor Les Galland, Shakopee, Minn.

Pastor Brian Pearson, Ruskin, Fla.

(One layman, five-year term)

Mike McCarlson, Webster, S.D.

John Talley, Newark, Ill.

Board of Pensions

(One layman, five-year term)

Murrau Haugen, Deshler, Neb.

Jordan Volk, Brandon, S.D.

World Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One pastor, five-year term)

* Pastor Craig Wentzel, Edmore, N.D.

Pastor Gerald Peterson, Oklahoma City

(One layman, five-year term)

Scott Erickson, Badger, Minn.

Jim Taylor, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Home Missions Committee

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)

* Kenneth Graham, Camarillo, Calif.

Joel Forness, Wahpeton, N.D.

(One layman, five-year term)

Carl Busse, Humboldt, Tenn.

Ron Jorgenson, Beulah, N.D.

ARC Board

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)

Allen Anderson, Clear Lake, Wis.

Ernie Hilbert, Wheatland, Iowa

(One pastor, four-year term)

* Pastor Eric Westlake, Zumbrota, Minn.

Pastor Cal Willard, Roseau, Minn.

Stewardship Board

(One pastor, five-year term)

X

X

Youth Board

(One layman, five-year term)

* Eric Christenson, Amery, Wis.

Heather Olson, Warrenton, Ore.

Board of Publications and Parish Education

(One layman, five-year term)

Andrea Christenson, Amery, Wis.

X

Commission on Evangelism

(One layman, five-year term)

* Dean Hobelmann, Republic, Kan.

John DeYoung, Dassel, Minn.

FLAPS Board of Managers

Voted on by corporation members

(One layman, five-year term)

* Ralph Peterson, Portland, N.D.

Kevin Hoops, Byron, Kan.

Nominees to serve at the 2009 Conference

Missions Corporation

(20 terms of five years each)

- * Pastor Mark Antal, Park River, N.D.
- Pastor Ray Ballmann, Kopperl, Texas
- Lester Carlson, Balsam Lake, Wis.
- * Robert Christian, Newark, Ill
- Pastor Brian Davidson, Laurel, Neb.
- Rolland Deschene, Argyle, Minn.
- * Pastor Eugene Enderlein, Plymouth, Minn.
- Mark Fagerstrom, DeKalb, Ill.
- Tom Fugleberg, Roseau, Minn.
- Pastor Tom Gilman, Lakeville, Minn.
- Pastor Dennis Gray, Newfolden, Minn.
- LuVerne Hagen, Badger, Minn.
- Don Hanson, Ray, N.D.
- Murray Haugen, Deshler, Neb.
- Katherine Hilgendorf, Brooklyn Park, Minn.
- Pastor Herb Hoff, Salinas, Calif.
- * David Jameson, Earlville, Ill.
- Pastor Craig Johnson, Astoria, Ore.
- ** Willis Kettelhut, Deshler, Neb.
- * Dwight Kiefert, Valley City, N.D.
- * Carol Knapp, Willmar, Minn.
- * Pastor George Knapp, Willmar, Minn.
- George Lautner, Bethel Park, Pa.
- Pastor Greg Lenz, Chanhassen, Minn.
- * Clyde Lundgren, Presto, Pa.
- James McMillen, Oceanside, Calif.
- Harvey Matheson, Balsam Lake, Wis.
- Lay Pastor Jerry Nelson, La Crosse, Wis.
- Pastor Joel Ocker, Frost, Minn.
- Wayne Olson, Blue Earth, Minn.
- * Daniel Rugroden, Hickson, N.D.
- Marvin Schaper, Beulah, N.D.
- * LeRoy Schierkolk, Prairie Farm, Wis.
- * Pastor Tom Schierkolk,
Eben Junction, Mich.
- Pastor John Skeie, New Hope, Minn.
- Robert Softing, Hawley, Minn.
- Pastor Kent Sperry, DeKalb, Ill.
- * LaVern Thompson, Fergus Falls, Minn.
- Wayne Walker, Kenyon, Minn
- X

Committee No. 1

(Administration)

- Lester Carlson, Balsam Lake, Wis.
- Pastor Richard Carr, Hagerstown, Md.
- Jon Dryburgh, Grafton N.D.
- David Ford, Dalton, Minn.
- Jim Taylor, Pittsburgh, Pa..

Committee No. 2

(Schools)

- Loiell Dyrud, Thief River Falls, Minn.
- Pastor Thomas Gilman, Lakeville, Minn.
- Pastor Wayne Hjermstad, Bruce, S.D.
- Pastor Rich Ramsbacher,
Culbertson, Mont.
- Paul Strand, Kenyon, Minn.

Committee No. 3

(Missions and Evangelism)

- Rolland Deschene, Argyle, Minn.
- Pastor Greg Lenz, Chanhassen, Minn.
- Pastor Jim Ritter, Prior Lake, Minn.
- Richard Stimson, Cleburne, Texas
- Pastor Jonathan Unverzagt, Sparta, Wis.

Committee No. 4

(Publications and Parish Education)

- Nathan Dalager, Argyle, Minn.
- Pastor Dennis Gray, Newfolden, Minn.
- Pastor Rodney Johnson, Stanley, N.D.
- Scott Schauer, Oklahoma City, Okla.
- X

Committee No. 5

(Stewardship and Pensions)

- Pastor David Johnson, Cloquet, Minn.
- Pastor Gary Simons, Fargo, N.D.
- Three more nominee needed

Schools Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

- Pastor Al Bedard, North Branch, Minn.
- * Pastor Jon Benson, Upsala, Minn.
- * Arne Berge, Binford, N.D.
- Lay Pastor Bill Buck, Sinai, S.D.
- Pastor Todd Erickson, Roseau, Minn.
- Brad Folsland, Oldham, S.D.
- * Darrell Haugen, Binford, N.D.
- Alan Hinkelman, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- Pastor Phil Hooper, Duluth, Minn.
- * Steve Jankord, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Pastor James Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn.
- * Pastor Gary Jorgenson,
East Grand Forks, Minn.
- * Pastor James Molstre, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- * Pastor John Mundfrom, Eugene, Ore.
- Pastor Dennis Norby, Newark, Ill.
- ** Pastor Brian Pearson, Ruskin, Fla.
- Pastor Jim Ritter, Prior Lake, Minn.
- Mike Rudebusch, Roseau, Minn.
- Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, Minot, N.D.
- Todd Waldie, Fergus Falls, Minn.

(1 term of one year)

- Pastor Kirk Flaa, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- X

ARC Corporation

(10 terms of five years each)

- Pastor Karl Anderson, Bagley, Minn.
- Dan Ballmann, Hico, Texas
- Bryan Balstad, Greenbush, Minn.
- * Dale Bentley, Circle Pines, Minn.
- Gary Buentemeier, Albertville, Minn.
- * Kathy Carlson, Balsam Lake, Wis.
- Dennis Holman, Minneapolis, Minn.
- Kevin Holman, Plymouth, Minn.
- * Pastor David Johnson, Cloquet, Minn.
- * Larry Johnson, Amery, Wis.
- * Dr. Steven Johnson, Upsala, Minn.
- Tim Kjeseth, Amery, Wis.
- Greg Koch, Wilson, Wis.
- Kyle Mackey, Champion, Mich.
- Pastor Shane McLoughlin, Cumberland, Wis.
- * Pastor Joel Rolf, Plymouth, Minn.
- * Cliff Seldal, DeKalb, Ill.
- Bruce Sellent, Almena, Wis.
- Roger VanSomeran, Amery, Wis.
- Randy Walz, Ellsworth, Wis.

conference REGISTRATION

June 10-13 in Oklahoma City, Okla.

Hosts: First Lutheran, Oklahoma City, and Faith Lutheran, Durant, Okla.

Conference site: St. Luke's United Methodist, 222 NW 15th St., Oklahoma City

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

First name: _____ Spouse's first name: _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Congregation: _____

(Circle)

You are: Pastor Visiting Pastor Lay Member Lay Visitor

Your spouse is: Pastor Visiting Pastor Lay Member Lay Visitor

Name of person attending WMF Convention on June 10: _____

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

Meals

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

Special meals and banquets

Tuesday WMF luncheon	_____ X \$8.50	\$ _____
Tuesday WMF banquet	_____ X \$11.50	\$ _____
Wednesday WMF advisory board breakfast	_____ X \$7	\$ _____
Wednesday general lunch	_____ X \$8.50	\$ _____
Wednesday Builder's Fellowship lunch	_____ x \$8.50	\$ _____
Wednesday Schools Corporation dinner	_____ X \$11.50	\$ _____
Thursday Mission Corporation breakfast	_____ X \$7	\$ _____
Thursday general lunch	_____ X \$8.50	\$ _____
Thursday PIMO lunch	_____ x \$8.50	\$ _____
Thursday ARC Corporation lunch	_____ X \$8.50	\$ _____
Thursday Pastors and Wives banquet	_____ X \$20	\$ _____
Friday general lunch	_____ X \$8.50	\$ _____

Total lunches/special meals \$ _____

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

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

Total registration and meals \$ _____

Make checks payable to: First Lutheran Church
Mail to: First Lutheran Church, Attn.: AFLC Conference Committee,
1300 N. Robinson, Oklahoma City, OK 73103

Our times are in **HIS HANDS** *Plan for the national convention*

BY ROBIN JAMESON

Did you miss it? Were you there last year or in 2006? Maybe you have never attended our annual WMF convention. It is held in conjunction with the AFLC's annual conference — same place, same week. It is not merely a convention day of business. Each year brings new speakers and performers who teach, inspire, and lead by example. The Bible study challenges you to seek to apply God's Word to your life. Workshops train and inspire you to use biblical concepts in everyday life. A woman, just like you, shares from personal experience at the luncheon and banquet what God has placed on her heart.

With a wide variety of speakers and topics, it is a day filled with strong biblical teaching and inspiration. But don't forget the music, skits, and a short business meeting. You'll also enjoy the door/game prizes, messages from missionaries, and fellowship with Christian women from around the country.

This year, on June 10, we will see you all in sunny Oklahoma City, Okla., for our convention, and June 11 for the mission festival service. Speakers include:

- Nancy Holcomb, the WMF's 2007 Bible study writer
- Jane Rasmussen, a mother and pastor's wife
- Sandra Weaver, workshop titled, "Good Times-Alert!"
- Wendy Westlake, workshop titled,

"Hope for Hard Times"

- Pastor Michael Brandt, workshop titled, "Finishing Well"
- Lynn Wellumson, World Class Christian presenter
- Dr. Lyle Mattson, World Missions Committee member
- And others!

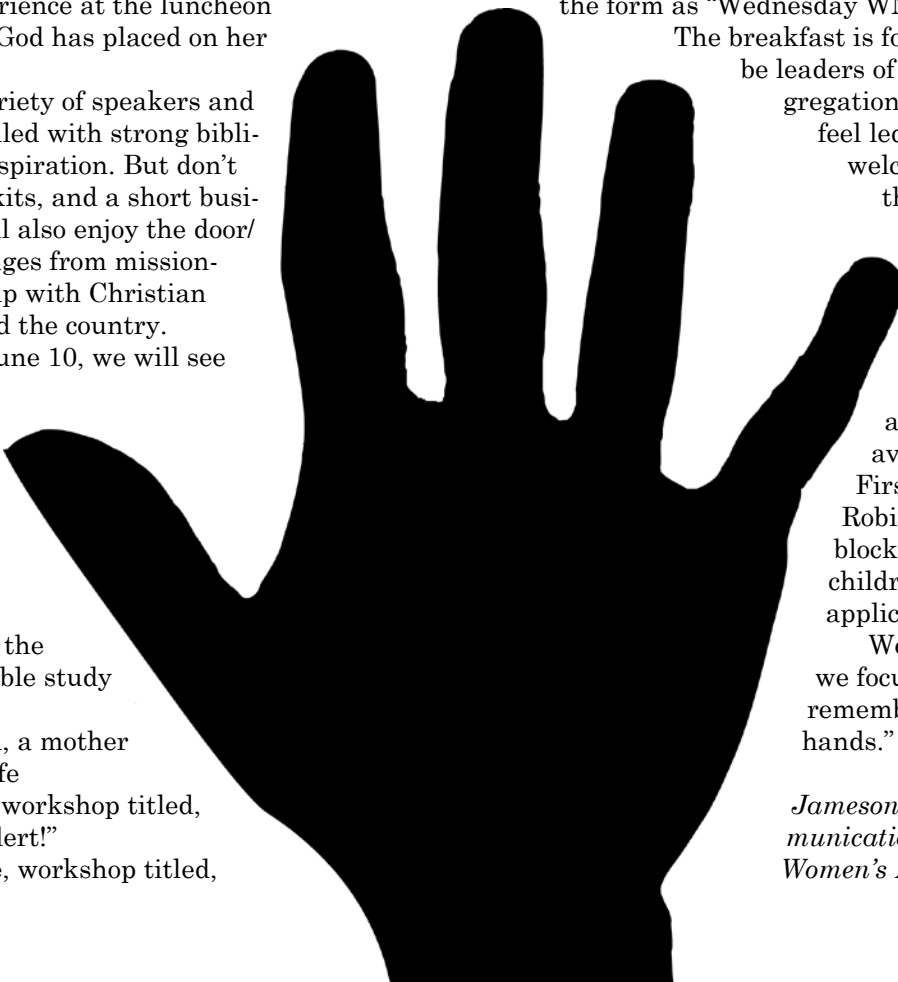
Please use the AFLC annual conference registration form to register for the WMF convention, the WMF luncheon, and the WMF banquet on June 10. Also consider joining us for the leadership breakfast, which is listed on the form as "Wednesday WMF advisory board breakfast."

The breakfast is for those who are or desire to be leaders of women's groups in their congregation or district. Any women who feel led toward a leadership role are welcome to attend. (Please note the breakfast is on June 11, not June 10 as previously printed.)

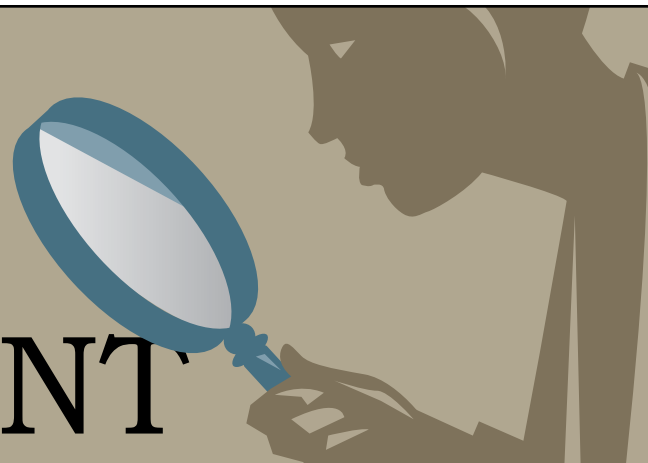
Activities on June 10 will be held at St. Luke's United Methodist, 222 NW 15th St. Babysitting, VBS, and youth activities will be available during the day at First Lutheran Church, 1300 N. Robinson, which is just a couple of blocks away. Please include your children's information with your application.

We'll see you in Oklahoma as we focus Psalm 31:14-15. Until then, remember that "our times are in His hands."

Jameson, Earlville, Ill., is the communication secretary for the national Women's Missionary Federation.



When mission work is GOD-RELIANT



I envy those of you who have no daily commute. My drive is normally an uneventful but intense 25 miles. This morning I jumped out into traffic and was quickly keeping pace with the cars a few feet in front of me and behind me. We averaged around 65 miles per hour with four lanes going each direction. You learn from experience that you must keep your focus on the car in front of you. If you look away, even for a fraction of a second, you can get into trouble. So you don't even take your focus off the traffic to adjust the heat. You quickly learn to turn it up or down by feeling for the knobs.

Keeping your focus in the right place is essential in life as well as driving. The Bible reminds us that our focus must always be on God and not on man. "This is what the Lord says: 'Cursed is the one who trusts in man ... But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord'" (Jeremiah 17:5, 7). Our mission works must encourage people to focus on what God can do through them, rather than focusing on what we can do for them.

Many mission works are set up as structures of support that foster a never-ending dependency on man. These mission works are institutional and top-down. The institution is funded with buildings, a denominational structure and pastor's salary. The outside funding can never end because those being reached for the Lord have no reason to mature, sacrifice and pay for something they are now receiving for free. There is also no ownership in a church that is funded by someone else. The problem is that the focus and trust has been placed on what others can do for us.

Other mission works are set up to birth and develop spiritual life. These have a never-ending dependency on God. They focus on developing spiritual life and a maturity that centers on the provision of God. These works do everything they can to point people to a trust in God rather than man, even when it would be easy to step in and provide everything needed. What are the results of these two vastly different focuses?

The result of a never-ending dependency on man:

- Those reached will have a hard time maturing and will become dependant on outside support. They may never become self-supporting and dependent upon God. Their

focus and trust will be in man and what others can do for them.

- They will always be subservient to the leadership of others. They receive their funding from an outside source and that source will either dictate exactly how the ministry should function, or allow them the temptation to use the funds without accountability.
- They will never fund another ministry, because they believe they can't even fund their own ministry.

The result of a never-ending dependency on God:

- Because they depend upon God, they will become spiritually mature and support their pastor and congregation. They may not be able to afford to construct church buildings like we have, but they will be able to build churches similar to their own homes.
- Because they are relying on the Lord rather than man, they will mature. They will not have to be subservient to the dictates of a donor that doesn't understand their culture or situation. Rather, they will develop their own leadership, which is guided by the Word and Spirit of God.
- Because they are focused on God and what He calls them to do they will reproduce. They will realize that they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them, and they will rise to His calling, reaching others at home and around the world.

Where is our focus in missions? Is it in setting up man-made structures that will focus on us and depend on us forever? Let us make every effort to focus on God and what He has commissioned us to do. Let us focus on personal spiritual life that leads to maturity. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age."

When we focus on God the ministries we start become led and supported by God, and reproduce.

Palmer is director of AFLC World Missions.

The art of spiritual WARFARE

Like the U.S. military in its global war on terror, we need to understand the limitations of human weapons in fighting battles against our spiritual enemies. And where do we look to find this spiritual strategy? We must look in the Bible.

God's plan for spiritual victory

One of the more descriptive passages in the Bible on spiritual warfare is found in Ephesians 6:10-20. Here the Apostle Paul tells us how to fight and win against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Did you know that the most important battles we face are spiritual battles?

All human warfare is part of a greater spiritual warfare. The fighting and killing that surround most human warfare are only visible signs of the unseen spiritual warfare between sinful people around the world and between Satan and God. However, the most important battle each of us must face on earth is the struggle over sin in our lives.

Spiritual victory requires spiritual weapons, including the Word of God, prayer, the Holy Spirit, faith in God, and the name and blood of Jesus Christ. Notice that all of these weapons come from God, not man. Only God's Spirit can pierce the soul of the human heart. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can atone for our sin. Only God can bring true peace to this world.

Effective use of spiritual weapons

Successful spiritual soldiers employ weapons effectively because they are familiar with them. This is critical if we are to defeat our enemy (sin, Satan and his evil army). Every Christian is expected to know how to use these weapons. They must

be trained in using God's Word rightly. They must step out in faith every day. This means faith in God, not faith in human reason or human might. You must persevere through prayer! You must claim the blood of Jesus Christ and use the name of Jesus Christ!

The most neglected spiritual weapon we have from God is prayer. Every spiritual defeat we have experienced in our lives results from a lack of prayer, often our own lack of prayer. But there is encouraging news. Every spiritual victory that we have experienced in our lives comes because people were praying. They were fervent in prayer. They made prayer a priority. In Ephesians 6:18-20, Paul is ordering us to pray, to use this powerful weapon from God.

During my recent military tour of duty as a chaplain I used the ministry of prayer to allow God to win many spiritual victories among the 1,200 airmen at my base. Our military congregation experienced miracles for the kingdom of God because we were faithful in using the weapon of prayer. I made a commitment to be continually in prayer. As I met with my military flock I would ask them, "Can I pray for you?" Prayer allowed me to help many hurting and searching souls.

The victory is ours

"But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57, NIV). We are called by God to bring the peace of Jesus Christ to people around the world. We are called by God to watch and pray. This requires us to be led by the Spirit of God and to be people of prayer. Jesus Christ often reminded His disciples to ask, to seek, to knock, to pray. Will you pray for spiritual victory today? For yourself? Your family? Your church? The world? Then watch and see how God brings His victory to us every day, victory over sin, victory over death, and victory over Satan! Thank you God for the victory!

Benson, a chaplain in the Air Force Reserves, will resign in June from the AFLC congregations in Jewell and Radcliffe, Iowa. After a brief term as chaplain at the Air Force

Academy this summer, he will study military strategy, international relations, foreign cultures and leadership skills for 10 months at the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB in Montgomery, Ala.



PEOPLE AND PLACES

Internship assignments for the 2008-09 school year have been handed out to AFLTS seniors. They are:

Joel Baker will serve Bethany Lutheran, Abercrombie, N.D., with Pastor Lee Hoops advising.

Joe Faldet will serve Abiding Savior, Sioux Falls, S.D., with Pastor Kirk Flaa supervising.

Seth Forness will serve Emmanuel Lutheran, Williston, N.D., with Pastor Jon Wellumson supervising.

Stephen Larson will serve Grace, Deephaven, Minn., with Pastor Dan Sollie supervising.

Patrick Lohse will serve Bethlehem Lutheran, Morris, Ill, with Pastor David Skordahl supervising.

Eric Swenson will serve Bethel Lutheran, Minot, N.D., with Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck supervising.

And **Sam Wellumson** will serve St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif., with Pastor Herb Hoff supervising.

Eric Rasmussen has accepted a call to serve as associate pastor at Calvary Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn., upon his graduation in May from AFLTS. Rasmussen is currently serving his internship assignment at Emmanuel Lutheran, Williston, N.D.

Andy Coyle has accepted a call to serve the Iowa congregations of St. Paul's Lutheran, Jewell, and Salem Lutheran, Radcliffe, upon his graduation in May from AFLTS. Coyle is currently serving his internship assignment at St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif.

The AFLC **Home Missions** department began conducting worship services April 13 at the Northland Arboretum, Baxter, Minn., near Brainerd. Contact the Home Missions office for more information, or visit the AFLC Web site (www.aflc.org) and click on the links info, HM 2008 Brainerd Project.

Contact departments to remain on e-mail list

Several AFLC departments will be updating their prayer e-mail lists and merging these lists into their database. This includes the president's office **Prayer Alert** and **Pastor's** email; Home Missions' weekly **Knee Mail**; and Evangelism's **Encouragers** prayer letter

These departments are asking for your input and help with this process. If you would like to be added to any of the above lists or if your e-mail has recently changed, please send us your name and both your mailing address and e-mail address. To receive the president's email, send your information to kmfloan@aflc.org; to receive the Home Missions or Evangelism emails, send your information to homemis@aflc.org. Or, mail your information for all e-mails to AFLC, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Boulevard, Plymouth, MN 55441.



Pastor Richard Carr (fourth from right) was installed as pastor of Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md., on Feb. 10. Officiating at the service was Pastor Paul Nash (third from right), AFLC Home Missions director. Christ Community is an AFLC Home Missions church plant. Pastor Mark Benz, a recently retired Army chaplain, served the congregation on a part-time basis. Carr previously served Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis.

Register now for Rekindling the Fire

Pastors and their wives are invited to the 2008 Rekindling the Fire, a day set apart for renewal by the AFLC's Evangelism department.

The event is scheduled for June 9 at First Lutheran, Oklahoma City, Okla. The program will include a workshop titled, "Evangelism Through Small Groups," presented by Bruce Kotila, and a dinner and program at the State Capitol Rotunda. The event is free to AFLC pastors and their wives.

For more information and to register, e-mail the Evangelism department at evangelism@aflc.org.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1- March 31, 2008

FUND	TOTAL (Subsidy)	REC'D IN MARCH	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$360,331	\$24,248	\$89,801	25
Evangelism	113,084	4,578	23,116	20
Youth Ministries	71,249	5,794	22,443	31
Parish Education	116,771	9,804	28,591	24
Seminary	220,252	11,329	41,203	19
Bible School	346,706	15,754	59,506	17
Home Missions	332,985	16,204	55,877	17
World Missions	288,948	12,844	80,427	28
Personal Support	457,495	31,434	119,759	26
TOTALS	\$2,307,821	\$132,434	\$520,723	23
TOTALS 2007	\$2,220,688	\$157,596	\$546,247	25

Goal 25%

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

[REAL] SICKNESS

When I sneezed or sniffled as a kid, my mom often responded with, “Sounds like you’re coming down with something.” I would say, “No, I’m fine.” If I was sick it resulted in Vicks being rubbed all over my chest.

When I was kid I did what I could to avoid having that greasy stuff spread all over me.

Sometimes I really was sick, but my first reaction was to say I was fine. I still tend to do the same thing.

Some people operate that way when it comes to their spiritual health. They do things that are clearly contrary to God’s Word, but excuse their actions. Beliefs that are not at all in line with the Bible are expressed. Someone may voice a concern that there might be a problem. The response is, “No, I’m fine. Don’t worry about me.”



Pastor Craig Johnson

People sometimes go to the other extreme regarding another person’s health. They see somebody they maybe haven’t seen for a while. The person has lost some weight or hasn’t seen a lot of sunlight in recent days. People may wonder, “Are they feeling okay? Is there something wrong?” I’ve known people who’ve been asked those kinds of questions and actually they’ve been feeling fine.

At times a problem can be perceived where none exists. The person may not look right in our mind, but physically they’re fine. A similar thing can happen spiritually. We assume a person is in poor spiritual health because they don’t do things the way we think they should. Maybe they’re dressing a little different, reading another translation of the Bible than what we use or listening to music that sounds weird to us. We may think they’ve slipped off the spiritual deep end, when actually their relationship with Christ is strong.

It can be hard to know who is spiritually healthy and who isn’t.

Before we try to analyze the health of others, we need to check our own. In explaining His command, “Do not judge,” Jesus said, “first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:1, 5, NIV). Jesus doesn’t tell

us to ignore the speck in our brother’s eye. Before we help him with his situation, however, we need to honestly face our own major sin problem.

Sometimes a brother or sister in Christ is spiritually sick, but denying an illness. They need to be lovingly and gently confronted. We don’t want to see any fall away. The Bible says, “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

If we are going to let people know of our concern for their spiritual health, we need to do so with great humility. We’re more likely to be listened to if we have previously

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served them and clearly demonstrated our love and earned their respect. We also ought to know the chapter and verse of the Bible that clearly shows that what they are doing or believing is wrong.

If the Bible doesn’t make clear that the other person’s beliefs or actions are wrong, then we ought to avoid calling them spiritually sick. We may choose to do things differently. Our opinions on some issues may vary. But the Bible is the authority. We determine right and wrong, spiritual health and sickness, on the basis of Scripture, not our traditions or preferences.

We have to humbly admit we all start out spiritually sick, separated from God by our sin. It is God’s grace alone that gives any of us spiritual health. But Jesus “took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows ... and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4, 5).

The church is not a museum where people display their righteousness. It is more of a hospital, full of people who have been terribly sick and are being made well by the great Physician, Jesus.

building the base

BY PASTOR RICH CARR

What you DESERVE

I recently took a short day trip to Washington, D.C., with my family to see the cherry blossoms. As the seven of us tumbled out of our well-worn mini-van and made our way to the first of the memorials lying along the way to the cherry trees, I was moved to think of the many different men and women who made great sacrifices to make our country great. The first memorial along our trek was that in honor of George Mason, considered, along with James Madison, the Father of the Bill of Rights.

After attempting to corral our kids from climbing onto the bronze likeness of Mason, and keeping them from trampling through the flower beds that were being worked on, we moved on to the Jefferson Memorial. This well-known memorial served to bring enlightenment to me. As I waited for Brenda to help the kids in the bathroom, I started reading all the things about Thomas Jefferson that were inscribed on the walls inside the lower half of the monument. I began to picture in my mind's eye what he might have been like, and pondered how Jefferson contributed so much to the country. He was concerned for those who didn't have the same resources he had. The simplest things like efficient farming techniques and providing a library for research and "enlightenment" of information were important to Jefferson. I could have spent hours reading and learning more about Jefferson. Unfortunately the natives were growing restless as they

piled out of the bathroom and pulled me in the four different directions that they wanted to go.

After holding a specially called council meeting to see who got to push the elevator button, we eventually made it to the upper floor that contained a mammoth statue of Jefferson and more quotes inscribed on the walls.

As I read, I began to realize how myopic my world view had been. I began to see better how selfish I am. The biblical story of Jonah is the story of Rich Carr. Instead of complaining to God when things don't work out for my best, I need to remember that the whole world is God's. Life doesn't revolve around what is my best, but what is God's best. God doesn't owe me anything. Rather, I owe God my all in all. After being enlightened on the history of our country, I began to see that indeed God has blessed me with far greater blessings than I ever realized. How selfish I have been. How focused I was on my immediate issues.

Toward the end of Jonah's story, God asked him a question. I will roughly paraphrase it to use in the context of my revelation: "You have worried about the tiny things of your life, which I have richly given to you, yet you don't think of those who have less in this world and no living knowledge of the truth. Are these people as important to you as they are to me?"

Carr serves Christ Community Church, Hagerstown, Md.