

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

OCTOBER 2005



# God AND THE LAW

One of my favorite moments during our time in Karpacz, Poland, is a memory that I won't soon forget. The final evening of the 2005 Bible Retreat Institute, where our mission team shared a special time of fellowship with our newfound friends, was a fitting end to an unforgettable trip.

The first annual Bible Retreat Institute, supported by East European Missions Network and the



Center for Missions and Evangelism in Poland, was held at a retreat center in the mountains of western Poland. Under the leadership and direction of Jasia Gazda, founder of the Child Evangelism Mission in

Poland and leader of Rainbow Garden Ministries, the youth leaders were impressively trained to teach the next generations about Jesus Christ.

More than 60 youth workers, Sunday school teachers, seminarians and prospective missionaries from Poland, the Czech Republic and Latvia gathered with our team of short-term missionaries for the 12-day retreat. We shared a blessed time of fellowship and growth in God's Word. Our EEMN team invested in the youth workers' lives through encouragement, discipleship and teaching.

As we prepared to depart, each to our own paths

of life, I realized how precious our time had been. For just a short time, we were united by our passion to serve the Lord. Regardless of background, nationality and language, we were bound together in fellowship. Knowing that we would likely never again be together until heaven, we had a special time of commissioning unto His service.

On the final evening, we shared in worship and Holy Communion. In a church more than a thousand years old, we sat closely in wooden pews. Under candlelight, we sang and gave praise to the God who united us together. Each of us was serving God in different ways, each according to the call placed on our lives. Whether pastors or teachers or youth workers. Whether from Eastern Europe or the United States. We all were bound together by the love of Christ and the call to share that love with others.

I couldn't help but wonder what it will be like when we are all gathered around the throne in heaven, praising God together with so many others. What a joy it will be to see our brothers and sisters from Poland, the Czech Republic and Latvia. Even more amazing will it be to see all those who have come to Christ through the obedience of His servants to carry out His mission.

How encouraging it is to remember the goal of our lives here on earth. God created us to worship Him and serve together in bringing lost souls to Him. Let's join with the Psalmist in proclaiming the power of the gospel to the next generation. Psalm 78:4-6 says: "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done ... so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children."

— Monica Coyle

East European Missions Network

October 2005  
Volume 43, Number 10



## THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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

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

### Subscriptions rates:

\$15 a year, Group Rate, U. S.

\$16 a year, Individual, U. S.

\$18 a year, International

Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN, and additional mailing office.

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

A Christian is a perfectly free lord  
of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful  
servant of all, subject to all.

— Martin Luther  
“The Freedom of a Christian”

The more force we  
use, the greater our  
disaster if we do not  
act humbly and in the  
fear of God.

— Martin Luther  
“To the Christian  
Nobility”

It is not necessary, for the gospel’s sake, for you to capture or  
occupy the city or place; on the contrary, let the ruler have his  
city; you follow the gospel. Thus you permit men to wrong you  
and drive you away; and yet, at the same time, you do not permit  
men to take the gospel from you or keep it from you.

— Martin Luther  
“Admonition to Peace”

... for the world and the  
masses are and always will  
be un-Christian, even if they  
are all baptized and  
Christian in name.

Christians are few and far  
between (as the saying is).  
Therefore, it is out of the  
question that there should  
be a common Christian  
government over the whole  
world, or indeed over a  
single country or any  
considerable body of  
people, for the wicked  
always outnumber the good.

— Martin Luther  
“Temporal Authority”



# UNDER THE LAW

✧ BY DR. JOHN EIDSMOE ✧

The background features a light beige color with faint, stylized floral patterns. A large, grey, decorative swirl is positioned behind the main text. In the bottom left corner, there is a circular inset showing a close-up of a historical document, likely the Declaration of Independence, with the date 'JULY 4, 1776' and the words 'United States of America' visible.

## RECONCILING SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH WITH THE LIKES OF CIVIL LAW, NATURAL LAW AND COMMON LAW

Luther's original plan was to become a lawyer. Even after God led him into the Church and used him to launch the Reformation, he never forgot his interest in law. His writings reflect his beliefs about Christian citizenship and the relationship of the Bible and theology to law and government.

Luther distinguished the law and the gospel. The law, he explained, says, “This is what you must do for God,” while the gospel says, “This is what God has done for you.” And while we are not “under law,” the law today has three uses: (1) the **civil use**, by which civil governments codify portions of the law and use it to restrain sin and keep order; (2) the **pedagogical use**, by which we learn of God’s perfect standards of righteousness, see our sinfulness in comparison to the absolute righteousness of God, and are driven to the foot of the cross for mercy and atonement; and (3) the **didactic use**, by which believers learn to conform their lives to the character and will of God as revealed in the law and grow in Christian maturity.

Luther grew up in an era of legal change. For centuries, Germanic law had been decentralized, highly individualistic, and based upon the ancient rights of free men. But in the 1500s the Holy Roman

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emperors and the Roman Catholic Church sought to import Roman law, with its centralization and its emphasis on state power. Luther loved the old Teutonic common law, as did most of the German princes who supported him. They believed the common law was based on natural law principles, which are the foundation of justice, and they opposed the introduction of Roman law because they believed it carried with it the seeds of tyranny.

While some of the Mosaic Law was unique to Israel, Luther believed the Ten Commandments apply to all societies at all times and places, because they embody the principles of natural law. “Natural law,” Luther said, “is the Ten Commandments. It is written in the heart of every human being by creation. It was clearly and comprehensively put on Mount Sinai, finer indeed than any philosopher has stated it. Natural law, then, is created and written in the heart; it does not come from men but is a created law to which everyone who hears it cannot but consent.” On another occasion he declared, “The Decalog is not of Moses, nor did God give it to him first. On the contrary, the Decalog belongs to the whole world; it was written and engraved in the minds of all human beings from the beginning of the world.”

Civil law, to be valid in Luther’s thought, must be consistent with the higher law of God: “Any prohibition that is contrary to the command of God means nothing whatever, though all the angels were to issue it,” he wrote. And despite the fall of man and its corruption of the image of God, man is still able to understand God’s natural law because it is



# Luther believed the Ten Commandments apply to all societies at all times and places, because they embody the principles of natural law.

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implanted in the human conscience: "... the entire Law which was handed down is nothing else than this natural Law which cannot be unknown to anyone. Therefore no one can excuse himself."

So long as civil government was based upon that natural law of God, it enjoyed Luther's enthusiastic support. He championed the cause of the peasants as they sought just reforms, but he vehemently opposed those who became a rebellious, murderous mob. He urged young people to go into government service to ensure that the laws were properly drawn and justly enforced.

Luther's concepts of law and government are relevant for us today. The ancient Germanic common law that Luther loved had been brought to the British Isles in the 500s AD by Germanic tribes known as the Angles and Saxons. Their Germanic customs became the basis for the Anglo-Saxon common law, and when Alfred the Great drafted a code of laws known as the Book of Dooms in 890 AD, he began it with a recitation of the Ten Commandments. Later Englishmen would defend the God-given rights of the common law against the usurpations of the Norman King John with the Magna Carta in 1215, and against the encroachments of the Stuart Kings with the English Bill of Rights of 1689.

The framers of our constitutional republic brought the English common law to America, and in many cases they altered it to make it more consistent with Scripture. The Declaration of Independence based our right to independence on "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," and

recognized that "all men are created equal" and are endowed "by their Creator" with unalienable rights.

Today we live in a postmodern age in which truth and law are considered relative and subjective. All too often, postmodern judges interpret the Constitution as a "living" or "evolving" document in which new human rights and new government powers seem to appear out of thin air whenever a federal judge waves his magic gavel. We forget that the same court that can read into the Constitution rights that aren't there (like abortion and sodomy) can read out of the Constitution rights that are there (like free exercise of religion, and private property, and the right to keep and bear arms).

Instead of a "living" or "evolving" Constitution, we need judges who will interpret our founding document as an *enduring* Constitution by which government is kept within its God-appointed limits and God-given rights are secure for all time. As spiritual descendants of Luther who have come to these western shores, may we pledge ourselves as Christian citizens to work and pray for such a kingdom.

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Dr. Eidsmoe, a professor of constitutional law at Faulkner University, Montgomery, Ala., is an AFLC pastor and a colonel and chaplain in the Alabama State Defense Force.

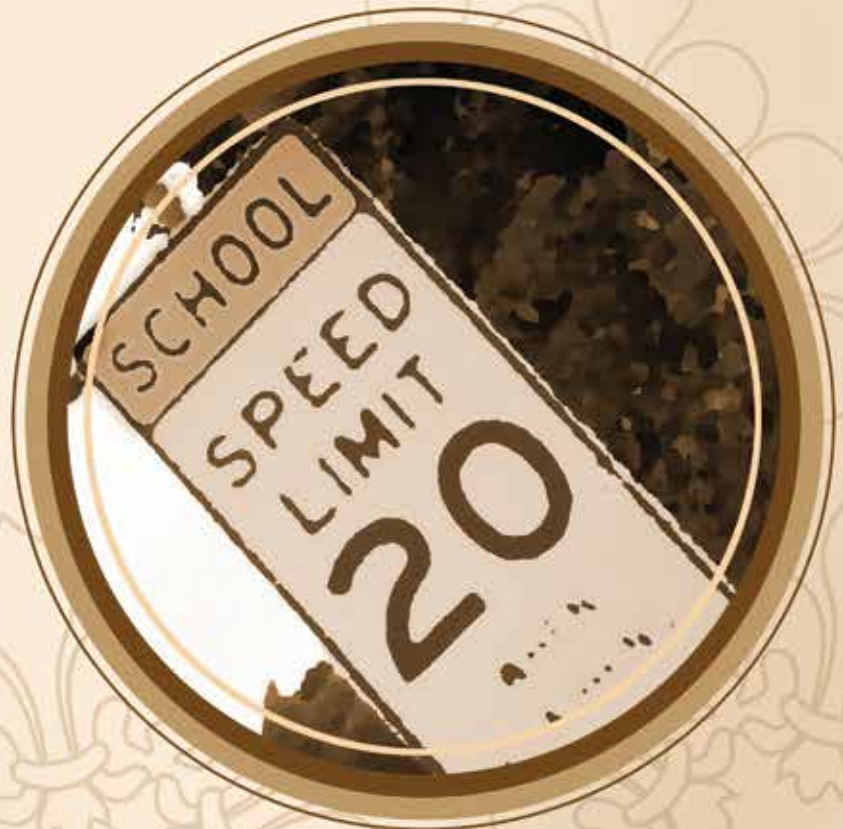
# LAW ABIDING

✈️ BY PASTOR JOHN MUNDFROM ✈️

You've never robbed a bank, right? Or killed someone? Or been convicted of assault? So that makes you a "law-abiding" citizen, correct?

We all tend to look at ourselves as people who obey the law and don't get into trouble with the police. And, of course, this is a good thing. Christians have a duty to obey the laws of the land and set a positive example in society. But is that enough? Is that what it means to submit to the authorities?

When it comes to the laws established by governments, we all distinguish between serious crimes and lesser offenses. There is a difference between a Class A felony like murder, armed robbery or rape and a misdemeanor such as jaywalking, speeding, or letting your dog run loose. The criminal codes make those distinctions, and so do we.





# NG CITIZEN

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities ...”  
(Romans 13:1)

It's relatively easy for Christians trained in God's standards of right and wrong, to keep from committing a felony. Not only would it be sin, but you'd probably get caught and have to face serious punishment. However, probably every one of us has broken some other, less-serious statute at one time or another. That's because we don't look at those laws in the same way. We're in a hurry so we “fudge” a little and drive 60 or 65 miles per hour, instead of the posted 55. There's no traffic coming so we cross in the middle of the street rather than walk to the corner and wait for the light. Your pet needs exercise so you let him off the leash to run freely in the park instead of keeping him in tow, as the law requires.

We break these lesser ordinances for various reasons. Perhaps it's because we think of them as nuisance laws that don't make sense or that hinder our freedoms. Some of these crimes are rarely prosecuted because they are broken so frequently and don't pose a great threat to society. Still others have a small fine, or minor punishment that we are willing to risk in order to live as we wish.

Even so, most of us become very upset if we are caught breaking a law and are required to pay a fine. Somehow we justify our illegal behavior to the extreme, not feeling that the punishment is fair, or that somehow the circumstances should make us an exception to the rule.

Paul's words are clear — believers are to subject themselves to all governing authorities, both to avoid punishment and “for the sake of conscience” (Romans 13:5).

God has given the government authority to enforce laws for the safety of its citizens. When we break the law or disregard it, we are really rebelling against God's authority (Romans 13:2). We are telling God that our *personal* will has preference over His *revealed* will. “If I want to speed down the road, or let my dog run loose, I

should be able to do so.” This attitude suggests that I consider *myself* — not the *law* of the land or, even the *will* of God — as the supreme authority. Such a sense of personal superiority will eventually result in chaos and anarchy. Rules and laws exist to maintain order and provide safety for all. As Christian citizens our own personal attitude and response to every law should reflect our fear of God and service to Him, so that we maintain a clear conscience and provide a godly example for others to follow.

When you do sin and break one of these laws, expect to be punished and willingly pay the penalty — with the prayer that such punishment will be a curb to keep you from doing it again. If you do “get away with it,” as often happens, do not think of it as endorsing your personal right to break the law and escape penalty. Do not consider it a stroke of good luck. Rather, let it remind you of God's mercy — that you have not been given the punishment you rightly deserved.

Respect for the governing authorities means that you recognize God's authority behind even the laws that make little sense or seem unjust. It means that instead of disobeying and following your own will, you submit and obey with the understanding that God's will is to work *within* our system of law and order, which He has graciously allowed us to enjoy.

Remember also how God deals with all our sin — through the shed blood of our Savior, who paid our fine and took on our penalty so that we could escape the ultimate punishment of hell. Remember that in His mercy, God has provided an escape from that sin because He loved us. Then return that love by submitting to the authority He has put in place.

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Mundfrom is pastor of Spencer Creek Lutheran, Eugene, Ore.

# YOU'VE BEEN SUED

✧ BY LOIS FORDE ✧

Christians will live a charmed life, according to the claims of prosperity gospel preachers. However, I agree with the authors of “The Sacred Romance,” Brent Curtis and John Eldredge, who suggest that each of our lives is a series of dramatic scenes in a story authored by God. Sometimes these scenes include suffering, illness, evil — and injustice. Even believers can be knocked off their feet and shaken to the core when adversity comes their way.

For several years I worked for a company that provided review courses for doctors who were preparing for board exams. My responsibility was to organize courses, which included everything from hiring faculty to managing event logistics. I loved the challenges of my job, the people I worked with, and the travel adventures. When a group of physicians whom I respected offered me a partnership in a new company, it seemed like an excellent opportunity. After much thought, prayer, and seeking the advice of Christian family and friends, I accepted the offer.

Things were moving along well with our new company — until my former boss sued me. There were five charges against me, all lies. I was accused of things that I wouldn't have imagined, and naïve enough to think that I couldn't possibly be sued for \$850,000 when I had done nothing wrong. My former boss wanted to punish me for leaving his company; attempting to manipulate the legal system was a game he often played.

Thankfully, I hired an excellent lawyer to defend me. The lawsuit lasted more than five years, cost thousands of dollars, and was appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Along the way one charge was dropped, another was thrown out as a sanction against my former boss for not complying with court rules, and I was completely exonerated on the other three. In January 2005 I was awarded reimbursement of my legal fees and closed the chapter on this lengthy and tumultuous scene in my life. My former boss' attempts to abuse the legal system failed!

Jesus didn't teach that Christians would lead a charmed life. In fact, He gave a dramatically different perspective in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." What? Christians "will have trouble"? Maybe there's another translation that says "might," or "slim chance" or perhaps an unless-you-remain-faithful-to-God escape clause.

II Corinthians 4 says, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." And in James 1:2, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature, and complete, not lacking anything." That's right — *whenever* you face trials, not *if* you face trials.

Given that we *will* face troubles, God tells us what to do: James 5:13 reads, "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray." It's a straightforward, simple instruction. Throughout my lawsuit, I prayed for peace and strength. I prayed for wisdom for my lawyer and the judges. I prayed for justice. I prayed that I wouldn't become cynical, angry or bitter. I prayed for protection from evil and for patience

shadow of your wings from the wicked who assail me." And Psalm 9, "You have upheld my right and my cause; you have sat on your throne judging righteously." And Psalm 27,

The Lord is my light, and my salvation — whom shall I fear: The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me ... when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall ... For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle and set me high upon a rock ... Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence. I am still confident of this; I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart.

I had times of doubt during the lawsuit, but God, through His Word, turned me back to the faith that defines and sustains me. God is the Author of my story, He is in control of my life, and He doesn't make mistakes. He allows painful circumstances that cause me to stretch and grow in order that His name might be glorified.

when things moved slowly. I even prayed for my adversary, which was difficult.

Family and friends were incredibly supportive, and their prayers were deeply felt. My nephew, Matt, suggested that I look at the situation positively and take the opportunity to learn everything I could about the legal system. Our daughter, Rachel, was in law school at the time and tutored me when I didn't understand. She and our younger daughter, Noelle, were my encouragers and never failed to call to say they were praying for me during a deposition, hearing, or as we were waiting for a verdict.

I was reminded in an extreme way to totally depend upon God and His promises to watch over me, to be a shield around me, to protect, sustain and uphold me. God reminded me in His Word that I should not fear those who are against me, that the way of the wicked will perish, that He doesn't take pleasure in evil, and that He will destroy those who tell lies.

The Psalms became so alive! I read and reread Psalm 17, "May my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right ... Hide me in the



Forde, who lives in Arlington, Wash., is a member of Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash.




# BUT IF NOT



✧ BY JOHN TALLEY ✧

“But if not ...” Found in the book of Daniel, this phrase is part of a story familiar to most from their Sunday school days. King Nebuchadnezzar has created a golden image and commanded the people of Babylon to bow down and worship it. Anyone who doesn’t will be thrown into a blazing furnace. Three Jewish boys, exiles from Israel, are put to the test. Their answer to the king is a wonderful testimony to their recognition of the One in whom they have placed their trust:



O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. *But if not*, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up (Daniel 3:16-18, NKJ).

Canadian law now prohibits ministers from preaching against homosexuality. AFLC Pastor Jason Siemens, a recent AFLTS graduate, is now among those facing this reality in his service in the AFLC-Canada church in Edmonton. To those of us in the States, the situation is only theological ... for now. To Jason and his wife, Jeannie, it is very real right now.

I don't know whether Jason and Jeannie had envisioned this possibility when they answered God's call to return to Canada. For millions in countries all over the world, Christians face this challenge: obey the law of the land and betray my faith, or remain true to my faith, engage in civil disobedience and risk the consequences. We would be wise to recognize that we, too, may well face this challenge. How do we, as sincere Christians, determine when we are allowed — or even required — to disobey and refuse to perform a governmentally forced act?

Take a minute to think through examples of civil disobedience in the Bible, both Old and New Testament. In the New Testament, we read in Acts 4 and 5 of Peter and John defending, before the Sanhedrin, their right to teach the gospel message. You may recall their memorable answer: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Today's culture — with the Supreme Court continuing to allow the killing of those still in the womb, or with the sobering visage of a dying Teri Schiavo — challenges us to lead biblically informed and directed lives. Do we avoid preaching what the Word says about homosexuality? Should we refuse to pay taxes in opposition to government support of abortion? What should we do when our state passes new legislation on euthanasia? Should we obey a law that prohibits us to spank our children? This is what Swedish Christians now face.

First, a distinction: I believe that it is important to recognize that our responsibility to submit to the governing authorities (Romans 13) does not mean that we are therefore also to *obey* all its laws. If a law is directly contrary to the Word of God, then it is not only right not to obey it, we, as Christians are *obligated* not to submit to it. Further, a law is to be

disobeyed when it is contrary to the Christian's conscience as confirmed by clear teaching of the Word. It is important to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Lord and remember that we are required to be submissive to the penalty extracted by the government for the disobedience — even lions' dens and fiery furnaces.

## Principles to live by

✚ We must, as with the stories from Daniel, affirm as Christians that God is sovereign; He is above all other authorities. When the law of Caesar butts heads with God's law, the law of man must always relent.

✚ We must also affirm the legitimacy of human government. Even the emperor-worshiping government in the Apostle Paul's day was allowed by and used by God.

✚ We must submit to authority — whether to God, government, husbands or parents.

Christians hold a unique and peculiar place between God and government. As noted by Lynn Buzzard in his book, "With Liberty and Justice: A Look at Civil Law and the Christian," Christians possess "a unique truth in a world structured with lies and illusions. In the world of idolatry, the believer stands in sharp contrast. The believer will at times confound or enrage the high priest of man's secular idolatrous allegiances. The believer contends with principalities and powers. The believer thus stands against the 'lie', which is at the foundation of this world."

We should give thanks to God for giving us, in His Word, the guidance that we need to rightly determine what He would have us do. We should then use wisely the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word, as we increasingly go out to meet in battle an American culture and a world that wage war against the Lord and those who will remain true to Him, even to death.

In Revelation we read of those who are forced to receive the mark of the beast (13:16). Perhaps you will be faced with that choice. May it be that all who name the name of Christ will not shrink from the lions' den or the furnace when that day comes. May we say with those who are surely in the great cloud of witnesses, "But if not!"

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Talley is the director of legal services for Administer Justice, a non-profit Christian legal aid clinic located in East Dundee, Ill. He is a member of Helmar Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill.



# MY

WHAT JAMES 4:11-12 SAYS ABOUT  
CRITICIZING OTHER CHRISTIANS

# PREROGATIVE

✧ BY PASTOR BRENT OLSON ✧

The Bible is full of scenes where men encroach on God's prerogative. The man finishing King Saul off. Moses striking the rock. Peter wielding the sword. "Just who do you think you are?" is the implied divine answer to their presumption. "That is My prerogative."



In James 4:12, God says the same thing to Christians who are criticizing their church fellows. "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you to judge your neighbor?" In other words, hey little Christian, just who do you think you are to judge? That is My prerogative.

James makes the point that when we criticize our Christian brothers and sisters, we are, effectively, placing ourselves above God's law. Like prison inmates holding court over their fellow prisoners. Or like someone 50 pounds overweight mocking someone 60 over. We are all in the same condition, light years short of the glory of God. Equally under God's law, we might best shut up and thank God for His mercy.

When we step on God's toes these days, He doesn't answer us out of the whirlwind, as He did Job. He allows us to reap the whirlwind. We whisper about others in corners at conferences and council meetings and circles and services. So our churches become too windy for anyone new to find a safe haven there, let alone our families and us.

The word James uses for our presumptuous whispers in church corners is something like "slander." *Katalaleo* means to "talk down" or "run down" (4:11). The NASB reads, "Do not speak

against one another, brethren." You get the sense of someone being condescending toward another, or someone dragging another's name through the mud. "But that's okay," we good

LIVE

Christian people say, "because what I said about him was true. He really is a manipulator and a liar." The One and only Lawgiver and Judge says, though, "It doesn't matter." To place oneself in the position of judge — true or not — is an affront to the One.

You'll notice, too, that James tacks a little word onto the end of the sentence, "brethren." "Do not speak against one another, brethren." This is a complete parental lecture in just one word. Something along the lines of, "These are your brothers and sisters, after all. Co-heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod." Another way to say it: Though the holy Christian church we profess by creed is often wholly hypocritical, these are the people who will one day be standing radiant around the throne of Christ, basking in His reflected glory. So keep that in mind when you start sentences with, "Perhaps I shouldn't say this, but sister Suzie ..."

These days there is a bit of confusion about what it means to speak against another, or, more specifically, to judge.

These days there is a bit of confusion about what it means to speak against another, or, more specifically, to judge. When you find out a young woman in your Priscilla circle is living with her boyfriend, are you "judging her" when you state your concern to her? How about if you say something about it to another member of the group? We know from His time on earth that the One Judge has x-ray vision. Before He searches our hearts on that Day, we might want to search our hearts before wagging our tongues today. If we still choose to speak, James tells us at the end of his book, let it be to "save" a straying sinner's "soul from death" (5:19-20). In other words, let it be out of love. As Paul reminds us, "love is kind," "is not arrogant," "does not seek its own." Love sees itself under the law, a fellow pilgrim needing mercy, too.

One day a fellow pilgrim, a brother in Christ, told me he was struggling with homosexual feelings. "I suppose you think I'm an abomination," he said. I thought about it for a while and finally said, "No, you're a sinner just like me who desperately needs God's mercy." I didn't know what kind of impression this statement made on him until I dropped him off later that evening. I still remember him saying just as he closed the car door and walked away, "If you're ever a pastor," he said, "promise me that you will preach that homosexuality is *a* sin, not *the* sin." I, a fellow sinner needing Jesus just as much, promised.

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Olson serves Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa.

# ♦ a life investment

By Pastor John Abel

**Pastor John and Ruby Abel, center, meet with several former Sunday school students in Cianorte, Parana, Brazil, to celebrate 50 years of the Lutheran church in the city.**



It was the last week of March, and upon our return from a tent evangelism campaign in Iguacu Falls, Parana, Brazil, we received a telephone call. It was from a friend, Rev. Waldir Peres Martin, who had worked with us in Evangelism Explosion II training in Curitiba during the 1980s.

Pastor Martin was now retired in Cianorte, Parana, where his daughter lives. This city was first settled in 1953 and was inaugurated as a village on July 26 that same year. In 2003, the city, now comprising some 70,000 souls, celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Because there were no evangelical churches there that year, church members celebrated their 50th anniversary later.

Pastor Waldir, as part of the Evangelical Pastors Association of Cianorte, discovered in his reading of the town's history that the first church in the community was the Lutheran church, which also opened the first school. He saw my name listed, Rev. John Abel, and thought, "Is this the same John Abel I worked with in our state capitol of Curitiba?"

His question was confirmed. My wife, Ruby, and I, under World Mission Prayer League, had

entered the frontier city in 1954 and 1955 and inaugurated the first school and first evangelical church.

Now, under Pastor Waldir's leadership, the Association of Evangelical Pastors decided to celebrate the 50th year of the entrance of the gospel into Cianorte by asking the mayor and city council to pass a resolution making me an honorary citizen of Cianorte. We were invited to come before the mayor and city council to receive this recognition. At this meeting, which was open to the public, we were presented with a diploma titled, "Ciadadao Honorario," honorary citizen of Cianorte.

Ruby and I do thank our Lord that we have lived long enough to see some of the fruit of our call to dedicate our lives as missionaries in Brazil. It has been a privilege and joy to begin our AFLC mission here in 1964 and serve until our retirement in 1993. It is His great grace that has given us the health since then to return every year for about four months to help in the work. Our recommendation to our youths today is to invest your lives with the Lord as a missionary; you will never regret it. One soul is of more value than the whole world (Matthew 16:25-27).

# fly to Jesus

By Lori Crowell

**F**ly to Jesus. That is exactly what my husband, Pastor Michael Crowell, did on July 27. At the time, Michael was supplementing Mission Aviation Training Academy's (MATA) income by working as a demo pilot for Glasair Aviation at the Oshkosh (Wisconsin) Fly-In. While demonstrating the Glastar Sportsman in Wautoma for an outdoor television show, something went wrong and the airplane crashed. The accident is still under NTSB/FAA investigation.

Jeremy, our son, who was at the fly-in but did not witness the accident (it was 30 miles away), made the last entry in his dad's logbook. It reads,

**Date:** July 27, 2005

**Aircraft make, model and identification**

**mark:** On Angels' Wings

**Points of departure and arrival:**

**From:** Y50 (Wautoma Airport's Identification)

**To:** Home (Heaven)

**Remarks:** Best flight ever! Home with the Lord!

**Aircraft category:** Unlimited

**Conditions of flight:** Eternally Perfect

**Type of piloting time:**

Dual (instruction) received: Jesus

**Pilot in command:** No, Jesus was pilot in command."

Looking back, I can see that God has been preparing our family throughout these last couple of years. At Christmas time, Michael asked if I would buy him B.J. Thomas's song, "Home Where I Belong." I did, and when he listened to it, he would get into a dreamy state of mind and say, "Yes, that's so true. Lori, would you make sure that song is played at my funeral?"

I had thoughts throughout this past year that were perplexing to me. I would think, "If Michael were to die, what would we do? Would we continue MATA? Would Jeremy take over? Would I go back to work?" I would snap out of it and shake myself into the present. I tried to stuff or throw away those thoughts because I did not know where they were coming from.

Jeremy also had similar thoughts while attending AFLBS last year: "I wonder what we would do if Dad died?"

On July 23, I met with friends from church to pray. I prayed for safety at the fly-in this year. I also prayed that Michael would have a tremendous testimony this year. Did you catch that? Tremendous!

Two days after the accident, at a prayer meeting,

many people shared and prayed. Amy Gardner, a church member, said, "I asked God how Lori is going to handle this. God replied, 'I already have prepared her.'"

Many are asking, "What is going to happen to MATA? What can we do to help?" MATA is going forward and volunteers are coming on board to share the responsibilities. We truly believe that MATA will grow to the glory of God. But we need prayer. We have felt your prayers, and there has been an overwhelming peace because of them. We need you to continue to pray.

Please pray for the restructuring of MATA as responsibilities are divided among many people. Pray also for finances. MATA is a non-profit organization with its finances equally coming from student fees, sales of donated items or fund-raisers, and donations. MATA needs additional finances for the general operations fund — the most costly part of the program. Finances are also needed to cover ministry expenses for: Acting Executive Director Gordon Bakke; Jeremy, who is now the acting director of flight operations and maintenance; Tom Robertson, flight instructor and mechanic; and myself, as I continue as administrative assistant.

We would be willing to speak in any of your churches to share about what MATA has to offer. Please contact me for speaking engagements.

Thank you for your prayers and support. We cannot begin to tell you how much it means to us! May Michael's vision and God's ministry continue to the glory of God. May we all, like Michael, be prepared to fly away to Jesus!

Pastor Michael and Lori Crowell founded MATA in 1998 as a pilot training ministry for mission work. An obituary has been printed on page 22. Visit the MATA web site at [www.mata-usa.org](http://www.mata-usa.org).





# urgency of the *Call*

Jesus replied, “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ But they all alike began to make excuses.”

— Luke 14:16-18 —

**W**e all operate under a set of priorities. I picked up a magazine at the grocery store today that was titled, “America’s World War II Triumph in the Pacific.” I have always been fascinated at how the United States of America pulled together, and by the grace of God, fought and was victorious during WWII. I’ve heard stories of how young men lied about their age in order to enlist in the army and serve their country. Thousands of them never to return home again. Urgency was clearly part of their call.

I’ve also recently read stories of the early mission work of the Lutheran Free Church in Madagascar. “When the Lutheran Free Church was organized in 1897 under the guidance of Sverdrup and Oftedal, one of its chief concerns was missions, especially the fledgling field in Madagascar,” writes Loiell Dyrud and Leola Dyrud Furman in “Each for the Other, All for Christ,” a biography of Amos and Ovidie

Dyrud. “Sverdrup believed a visible sign of spiritual life in a congregation was its concern for reaching the lost around the world. This is evidenced in an 1883 article, where he suggests that, ‘Mission work, above all other enterprises, was an indication that God’s Spirit was active’ in a congregation.”

During the late 1800s and early 1900s many responded to the call to the Madagascar mission, fully aware of the probable consequences.

“During the early years of the LFC mission,” they write, “death and disease had decimated the missionary ranks to the extent that for every three missionaries sent, two, it seemed, either died or were forced to return to the United States in broken health. And yet there never seemed to be a shortage of those who heeded the call, though for some it meant almost certain death.”

One might ask what would motivate someone to face almost certain death to fight for his or her cause. My response would be true love. During WWII men and women sacrificed their lives for the love of their

country, their family, and fellow citizens. Christians — missionaries in particular — sacrifice their lives for their love of Christ and the ultimate sacrifice He made for them.

In many ways our society seems to have become complacent with things. Our priorities may not be in the right order. We find the time to do meaningless things while we never get around to the things that are really important. How many 17-year-old men would be willing to lie about their age in order to sacrifice their lives for our country today? How many Christians would be willing to accept God’s call and serve Him in overseas missions today?

The AFLC World Mission Committee senses the urgency in our work around the world. We will be highlighting specific opportunities in future articles. We are encouraging you to consider the urgency of the call you have received.

Caouette, who serves on the AFLC World Mission Committee, is a member of Solid Rock Free Lutheran, Anoka, Minn.

“The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. ... I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

— Luke 14:21, 24 —

# Time God's gift

[Stewardship]

By David Bjornson

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he writes, "Be careful, then, how you live — not as unwise; but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (5:15-16). One might ask, who gives us life, health, strength and mental abilities and enough time? If the answer to all these questions is God, then we ought to consider how He wants us to use them to bring glory to His name.

God challenges us to be stewards of many things: our talents and mental abilities, our management of relationships and finances and our use of time. Each one is granted exactly the same number of minutes and hours in a day. The great majority of us have 70 to 80 years to make use of that time.

Where do we get time? How shall we use it? What will the results be if we are good stewards of our time? Thousands of books have been written and millions of words have been spoken about this precious commodity. Time is simply a gift from God given lovingly in equal portions to us all. Paul tells us in Ephesians that we must be careful how we live, not as unwise, but wise. In other words, he suggests that we have a choice in how we manage our time. We can choose to give Him our best time or whatever is left over at the end of the day. Looking at Christ's use of time, we find in the Bible a descrip-

tion of Christ rising early in the morning to pray and have fellowship with God. Jesus also made time to minister to the sick or those in need when others had other ideas on how He should spend His time.

Poor time management can be a major source of stress. However, if we give this precious gift back to Him and ask Him for His help, He promises that He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly more than all we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Therefore, it is critical that we ask Him to help us manage the needs of our family, work and service to the Lord. God promises us that if we use our time wisely, we will advance the work of the Kingdom and bring glory to His name.

How are you using your time? Do you acknowledge it as a gift from God? Are you wise or unwise in its usage? Ask God to show you where you can make more time for Him and use your time more wisely. It's a precious commodity that can only be used once. May God grant you His peace and wise usage of your time.

Bjornson, who serves on the AFLC Stewardship Board, is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D.



## Speaker announced for Rekindling the Fire

Members of the Commission on Evangelism have announced that Dr. H.B. London will be the featured speaker June 19, 2006, for Rekindling the Fire. The special session, hosted for pastors and their wives, precedes the Annual Conference.

The conference, scheduled for the week of June 20-23, will be held at the Warm Beach Conference Center in Stanwood, Wash. AFLC churches in the Pacific Northwest are hosting the event. Look for more information on conference registration, housing and other related events in upcoming issues.

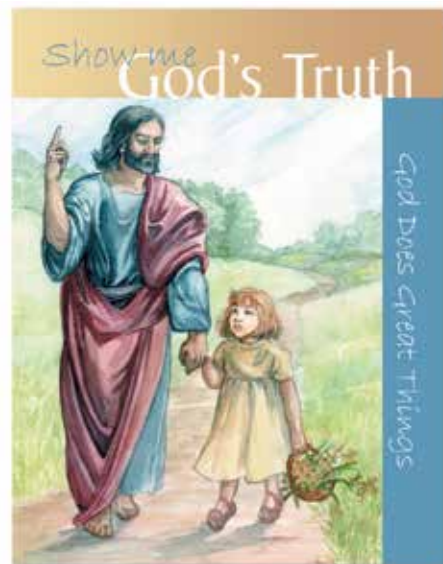
## Preschool curriculum available

### Titled 'Show me God's Truth'

Thanks be to God and to the people of the AFLC for providing the funds needed to begin printing the new preschool curriculum. The first quarter of student materials in the Ambassador Sunday School Series is now available from AFLC Parish Education.

Each week a new student leaflet with a Bible story, illustration, activity, and a special page for parents will be sent home with children. The parent page encourages ongoing learning at home and includes a prayer, interesting facts, ideas for family activities, suggested songs related to the lesson, and a list of daily Bible readings for family devotions.

Contact AFLC Parish Education



for more information or to order:  
email [parished@aflc.org](mailto:parished@aflc.org) or phone  
(763) 545-5631.

## AFLC President Lee nominated to Thrivent board

AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee has been nominated by two chapters as a candidate for the national board of directors of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans as

part of a reform slate of four candidates committed to preserving and enhancing the grassroots character of Lutheran fraternalism. The other candidates for the board represent-

ing Lutherans for Fraternalism ([www.lutheransforfraternalism.org](http://www.lutheransforfraternalism.org)) are Tom Montie, Pastor Daniel Preus, and Pastor Victor Pavlenko.



### Freimanis ordained in Latvia

Pastor Ojars Freimanis, a 2005 graduate of AFLTS, was ordained Aug. 14 in Latvia. Pictured (from left) are Ojars' mother, Ojars and his wife, Vineta, and her parents. Freimanis has returned to serve the church he left in Latvia to study at AFLTS. He will also continue in his chaplaincy ministry at the Naval Forces Training Center in Latvia.



### Dalton VBS raises funds for India

Safari Adventure was the theme at vacation Bible school Aug. 1-5 at Dalton Free Lutheran Parish, Dalton, Minn. There were 130 children enrolled in the outreach program, reaching preschool through youth. Offerings for the week totaled \$962, which was sent to the Horeb Children's Home in India.





## Family time at Wilderness Camp

The AFLC Wilderness Camp was held July 12-17 just south of Lake Park, Minn. Morning Bible studies, led by Pastor James Molstre, Pittsburgh, Pa., focused on the parables of Jesus. Nearly 20 children attended vacation Bible school taught by Sarah Rolf and Gracia Hjermstad during the morning Bible study time. Neighboring congregations hosted and led evening services, with Pastor Jeff Swanson speaking on the camp theme of "Christ is all, and in all."

The afternoon hours were filled with a water slide for the children, afternoons at the lake with water skiing and tubing, and volleyball. Everyone enjoyed walks and trail rides in the woods throughout the week. Those who attend Wilderness Camp have found it to be a time of rest and relaxation, but most importantly, a time of spiritual rejuvenation. The relaxed schedule lends itself to time with family, friends and the Word.

— Submitted by Amy Dalager



## August memorials

### AFLBS

Maxine Berg, Alvin Skarderud

### AFLT

Helen Braunschweig, Melvin Aune

### Evangelism

Melba Pillman

### Home Missions

Jeannie Brandt, Alvin Skarderud, Arlene Cooper, Ed Kummer, Fern Gunness

### WMF

Pearl McComas, Betty Haacke, Dorothy Havacost, Mae Sondreson, Evonn S kyrud, Ray Kinneberg, Charlie Mortimer, Kenneth Loomis, Merle Ulvestad, Fay Haasler, Kari Groth

### World Missions

Pastor Wallace Jackson, Hazel Carlson

### Youth Ministries

Alvin Skarderud

... in honor of

### AFLT

Pastor John H. Dennis (2), Pastor Dale Finstrom

### World Missions

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Haugen, Joel and Audrey Rogenes

## WMF has new web site

The Women's Missionary Federation has a new web site: visit [www.aflc.org/women](http://www.aflc.org/women) for information on the WMF, including seminars, Bible studies, a devotional, helps for the women in your church, and other pertinent information that is updated monthly.

## People & Places

**Pastor Stephen Snipstead**, Kalispell, Mont., received a Doctorate in Ministry from Bethel University, St. Paul, Minn., in May. Snipstead serves Faith Free Lutheran Church in Kalispell. He graduated from AFLTS in 1987.

Members of **Holy Cross Lutheran Church**, Sarasota, Fla., have changed the name of the church to **River's Edge Community Church**.

The congregation is served by Pastor David McCoy.

**Pastor Paul Jecklin**, Ambridge, Pa., is retiring from his ministry as interim pastor of St. John's Lutheran, Ambridge. The congregation is now served by **Pastor Gordon Strunk**.



# Crowell memorialized at community service

**P**astor Michael Jay Crowell, 48, of Arlington, Wash., died July 27 at Wautoma, Wis. Born Sept. 17, 1956, in Kalispell, Mont., he was the son of Mike (Lloyd) and Jean Crowell. He married Lori Hamann Aug. 30, 1978.

He grew up in Kalispell, graduating from Flathead High School in 1974. He earned an Associate of Arts degree from Flathead Valley Community College in 1976, a Bachelor of Science degree from Aurora State University of Aurora, Ill., in 1980, and a Graduate of Theology degree from the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, Minn., in 1989. He was working on a Doctor of Ministry degree from Faith Seminary, Tacoma, Wash., with a

thesis on mission aviation training. He served as a civilian police officer in Sycamore, Ill., and Parkers Prairie, Minn.; military police officer and investigator at Ft. Huachuca, Ariz., and near Frankfurt, Germany; army chaplain at Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Knox, Ken., including two deployments to Kuwait. He served as a parish pastor at St. Paul Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn., Christ Lutheran, rural Wichita Falls, Texas, Elim Lutheran, Lake Stevens, Wash., New Hope Lutheran, Snohomish, Wash., and Atonement Free Lutheran, Arlington. He also served on the AFLC's Home Mission Committee. While serving in Lake Stevens, he began a Civil Air Patrol unit. His doctoral project resulted in the founding of a ministry organization,

Mission Aviation Training Academy (MATA) in 1998. This was the full-time ministry to which he dedicated himself in these final years. While involved with this ministry, he served as a demonstration pilot for Pacific Aerosport and Glasair Aviation.

Surviving are his wife; two sons, Jeremy Crowell and Adrian Crowell, both of Arlington; and one daughter, Melissa (Rob) Herbst; parents, Lloyd and Jean Crowell; Brother, David; and two sisters, Karen, and Kathy.

The service was July 31 at Smokey Point Community Church, Smokey Point, Wash., with Pastor Rick Long officiating. The "Michael Crowell Memorial Fund" has been set up at Frontier Bank in Arlington.

## Pastor Emmerson Anderson dies at 83

Pastor Emmerson Anderson, 83, of Cleveland, Ohio, died Aug. 28, 2005.

Born May 6, 1922, in Deshler, Ohio, he was the son of Justus and Ruth (Jones) Anderson. He married Helen Bergman in 1947. She died in 1974. He married Martha Manthey in 1977.

Anderson attended the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and then served in the U.S. Merchant Marines from 1942-1947. He was ordained in 1983 in the AFLC.

He served several AFLC congregations, including Word of Life Lutheran Church in Cleveland, Ohio, from 1969 to 1987; St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Cloquet, Minn., from 1989 to 1996, and Floodwood, Minn.

He is survived by his wife, Martha, and three children, Judith, Jonathan and Gracia.

The service was Sept. 1 at Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, North Royalton, Ohio. Burial will be in the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery.

## Subscription rates increase in 2006

Members of the Coordinating Committee approved new subscription rates for 2006, as recommended by the 2006 Annual Conference.

Rates will increase by \$2/year across all subscriptions. Individual subscriptions, current-

ly \$16 a year, will increase to \$18. Group rates, currently \$15 a year, will increase to \$17. International rates, currently \$18, will increase to \$20. Bulk rates, currently \$14, will increase to \$16.

Rate changes will take effect on January 1, 2006.

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

#### AFLC Benevolences (8 months) – January 1 - August 31, 2005

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN AUGUST	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund* . . . . .	\$387,377	\$29,578	\$283,506	73
Youth Ministries . . .	56,062	8,213	48,748	87
Parish Education . . .	81,988	13,859	56,835	69
Seminary . . . . .	156,804	10,710	134,370	86
Bible School . . . . .	269,308	30,187	223,399	83
Home Missions. . . . .	277,870	22,751	162,053	58
World Missions. . . . .	262,377	12,433	142,398	54
Personal Support . . .	368,688	26,565	244,753	66
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,860,474</b>	<b>\$131,545</b>	<b>\$1,134,008</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>TOTALS 2004 . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,739,460</b>	<b>\$134,211</b>	<b>\$1,195,810</b>	<b>69</b>

**Goal 67%**

The Evangelism Department received \$3,100 in August.

\* Includes Evangelism totals

Please contact individual departments for more information on projects.

# the two kingdoms

[Editorial]

**F**or a symphony to have a good sound, each musician needs to play his or her part. If the trumpet player tries to play the flute part it won't sound right. If the percussionist uses his sticks on the violin there is going to be trouble.

God has given different institutions different parts to play. For things to sound right each group needs to play their part and not the part of another. Two institutions in particular that need to understand their God-given role and fulfill it are the church and the government.



**Craig Johnson**

The true church consists of all believers in Christ. The Lord established it; as Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18, NIV).

God also instituted government. Romans 13:1 says, "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God."

The government is to use earthly power — the sword — to preserve order and punish wickedness. That is the authority it is given by God. Its authority is limited, however, as Martin Luther wrote, to "life and property and external affairs on earth." The soul and conscience, wrote Luther, are beyond government's jurisdiction:

"The heart they cannot compel." When false teaching exists, the sword and law of government are useless. "Here God's Word must do the fighting," said Luther.

It was to the church that Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) and, "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

The church should not expect the government to do her job. Neither should the church attempt to do the job of the government. As Luther wrote, "... one must carefully distinguish between these two governments. Both must be permitted to remain; the one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds. Neither one is sufficient in the world without the other."

We are instructed in I Timothy 2:2 to pray "for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." We don't pray that those in authority will go and proclaim the good news. We pray that they will be able to maintain order in society so that we, the church, may be able to teach the Word of God.

The last few years there has been much discussion on the relationship between religion and politics. In the midst of it all it is important to keep in mind the distinction between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. We are not to expect the government to be totally Christian and an agent for teaching God's truth. That is not the role it has been given by God. The government is the means for maintaining order and restraining wickedness. It is not the proper means for bringing

The church should not expect the government to do her job. Neither should the church attempt to do the job of the government.

people into the kingdom of God. As an introduction to a book on Luther's political writings states: "... the goal of perfection does not belong to the political realm. To achieve perfection, grace and love are the required means, not the power used by the kingdom of this world. In sum, the end of perfection is beyond the power of man, for the kingdom of God is entered by faith through God's grace."

Likewise the church is not effective at governing. Luther wrote, "But first take heed and fill the world with real Christians before you attempt to rule it in a Christian and evangelical manner." That won't happen until the return of Christ. Sin will continue to plague us in this world, so the power of the sword remains necessary.

When evangelical Christians have gotten elected to political office, sometimes other evangelicals have rejoiced as if the church now has "real" power. The power of the church to transform lives does not go up or down based on election results. Life-transforming power is in the gospel of Christ, and that will never change.

[ARC]

# now that's *diversity!*

**I**n Romans 12:4-5 the apostle Paul shares God's definition of diversity: "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

At the Association Retreat Center (ARC) we are privileged to serve many ethnic groups worshipping God. Although backgrounds, cultures, skin color and language are all different, the focus is the same: to bring praise, honor and glory to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us from our sin, and gives us the promise of eternal life with our living God.

A sampling of the styles and backgrounds of recent and upcoming groups at the ARC include: Korean Presbyterian, Hmong Alliance, Chinese Christian Church, Russian Assemblies of God, Ukrainian Baptist, Assemblies des Dios (Latino Assemblies of God).

The International ministry encounter that the ARC hosted for Emmanuel Christian Center represented five continents and 14 countries in their fellowship — now that's God's diversity!

We have also hosted inner-city church groups, country churches, missionary training camps, youth outreach, inner-city adult outreach, physically and mentally handicapped kids camp, singing groups, family reunions, crafting and quilting clubs, sewing outreaches, and junior and senior high marching band camps.

I believe one of the reasons the Lord led me to this place is to learn that God's children are everywhere. The Apostle John writes in I John 4:15: "If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God." For a long time I knew this in my head. However, until I met these people and shared in their fellowship and worship, it hadn't traveled the 18 inches to my heart.

At the ARC we have a unique place set apart, where God can call — and has called — many of His people from different cultures. For most people — maybe even you — this is not a comfortable thought. Our human nature calls us to be with people most like ourselves. It's uncomfortable for us to step into someone else's culture. But God has never told us we will live a comfortable life. He gave us His commission in Matthew 28:19-20:

"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."

It has been a joy for me to see Jesus shining forth through great cultural diversity. In the United States we have the unique opportunity and privilege to have "all nations" before us daily. It can be a struggle to realize opportunities with people of different cultures, but are you doing all God wants you to do? Remember, God never promised it would be easy. When discouraged, pray for faith as Job did. Remember also that the Lord promised He would never give you more than you are able to handle. Go forth.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the blood of Jesus that has redeemed us. I thank you for the commandment that tells us to love others as You have loved us. Lord, I pray for eyes that see and words that speak the love of Jesus with all those appointed to me.

— Pat Flanders

Director of the Association Retreat  
Center, Osceola, Wis.