

A dim view

BY KAYLA PAIGE

ord, where is Your joy as my strength?" Without even informing me, that joy had slipped away. "Why?" I wondered to myself. So I took a peek into my heart's recent obsession and understood, ashamed. Inside my heart, there were deep clouds, sooty as if from a fire of green wood. They covered the place of God where His joy usually shone. What had blocked my Lord from view?

College. Something useful and good had become an idol. I had placed my hope in schooling rather than the Holy Spirit who leads into all truth; I thought education would provide security instead of seeking that in God my rock. A college degree would direct and fulfill me. Thinking in this way left me fretting, filled with fears. What if I chose the wrong degree? What courses should I take to best prepare me for the future? How much would it all cost? Besides these worries, there was the day-to-day dependence on my own intellect and industry to earn that bachelor's with all excellence.

The people of Israel also took idols into their hearts (Ezekiel 14:3). In a time of conquest and siege, Israel relied upon Egypt as their military ally against the merciless armies of Assyria. God fiercely condemned those who chose to scheme rather than await His salvation: "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!" Sin-smoke darkened their hearts and made them just like the surrounding nations, for their hope rested in the strength of a human army, not in the might of their Almighty God.

Whether it's brawn, brains, best friends, or money in the



bank, we tend to put our trust in anything but God. The clearer we see our own hearts, the more we understand that "[t]he heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9). Simply and naturally, the darkness

creeps in to blot out the light of His presence. Almost without us knowing, things which seem innocent bloat within us and push our Lord aside—away from the shining center of our lives.

If we ignore this, our thinking conforms to the world and we become discouraged and alone. If we confront and forsake those idols, we find strength to set the Lord always before us, abiding in the full joy of His presence (Psalm 16:8, 11). Our hearts attuned to any dimming, we can cry out, "Create in me a clean heart, Oh God ... Restore to me the joy of Your salvation" (Psalm 51:10,12). We can hear and believe God's words to Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15). When a remnant put their trust in the Lord, He fulfilled His promise and slew their enemies "not with the sword of man" (Isaiah 31:8; 37:36). When we, too, trust Him, who knows how He will blaze forth? Oh Lord, make your face to shine upon us once again!

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We cannot give God anything; for everything is already His, and all we have comes from Him. We can only give Him praise, thanks, and honor.

—Martin Luther

It must be an odd feeling to be thankful to nobody in particular. Christians in public institutions often see this odd thing happening on Thanksgiving Day. Everyone in the institution seems to be thankful "in general." It's very strange. It's a little like being married in general.

—Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

My thanksgiving grows in intensity and depth as I realize that this object of God's tender care is a sinner. My joy is enriched as it becomes clearer to me that my life in God rests upon the previous little word, unmerited. My very existence from cradle to grave rests upon grace.

—Sverre Norbora

We often sing, "Now thank we all our God," but few remember that this was written and sung in the midst of a destroying plague!

—Paul J. Lindell

Knowing that the Lord loves thankful people, His faithful servants never stop praising Him. They always give thanks to the Lord. Whether they are in times of ease or of suffering, they offer praise to God with thanksgiving.

—Athanasius

HABAKKUK'S FAITH

"See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright—but the righteous will live by his faith" (2:4).

By Pastor Jim R. Johnson



he tight job market in much of the U.S. these days often means people have to excel to be hired. Your resume, references, and interview have to prove your worth. I read about the tough competi-

tion, for example, to get hired by Google, Inc. Because of their success and reputation they get huge numbers of job inquiries.

To screen out applicants they have put out aptitude tests. Here are a couple of the questions they've used. "How many different ways can you color an ocosahedron with one of three colors on each face?" "On an infinite, two-dimensional rectangular lattice of 1—ohm resistors, what is the resistance between two nodes that are a knight's move away?" I don't know about you, but I'm not going to make it as a Google programmer.

Even more important than making it into a job situation is the question of making it into the kingdom of God. What kind of screening process decides who ends up in heaven and who ends up in hell? According to the above verse in Habakkuk, the requirement is to be "righteous." How well do you and I qualify?

Habakkuk 2:4 contrasts two approaches to God and His promises. First is the person who is "puffed up." This refers back to the Babylonians who were going to be used by God to bring judgment on the people of Israel. Their arrogance seemed well founded. In Habakkuk's day they were on top of the world. But God says of all such people, "his desires are not upright." He does not meet God's straight

standard set out in the law. As a result he will be judged. His puffed up self-reliance will be popped like a balloon and be shown to be without substance.

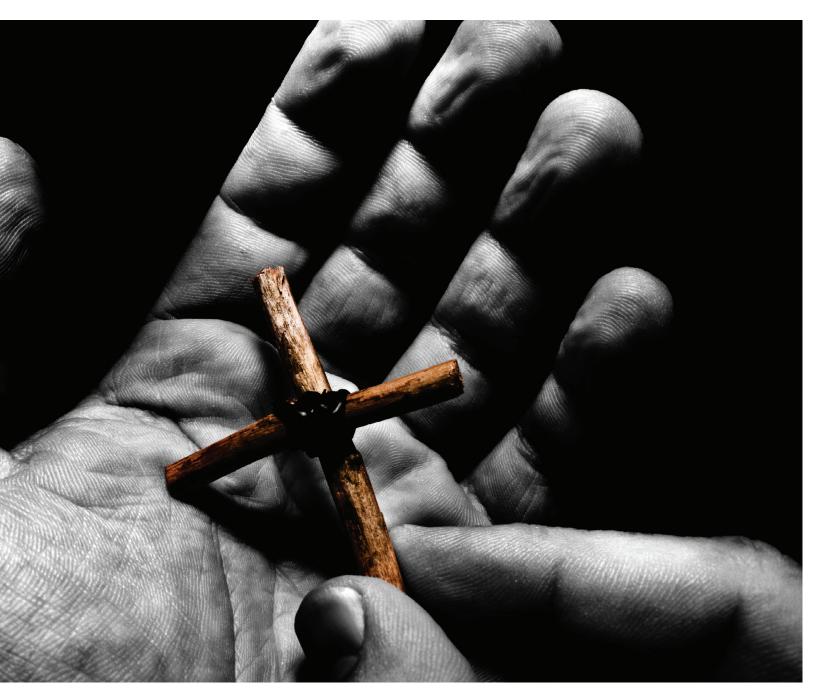
In strong contrast, emphasized by the parallel structure of the sentence in the original text, are "the righteous." This word also speaks of conformity to an ethical or moral standard. The standard is the nature and will of God—His perfect righteousness. In that sense, it appears the possibility of any of us being "righteous" is non-existent.

But other Scripture points us clearly to the righteousness of the promised Messiah as our only hope. His substitutionary sacrifice for sin is described in Isaiah 53. The Bible emphasizes that righteousness should be viewed from the context of a courtroom. Questions of right and wrong in the Old Testament were looked at from a legal point of view, to be decided by a judge. God is the final judge. The Message paraphrase helps us see how this can work when it speaks of "the person in right standing before God." The word



But even then, how can a human being stand before God's judgment seat and be found to be righteous? How does the righteousness of Christ put me in right standing with God? Paul, when quoting this verse in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:10-11, clearly states that this righteous verdict comes "by faith."

But there is some question about whether that was what Habakkuk intended as he wrote these words. Many modern versions have "by his faithfulness" instead of "by his faith."



And "faithfulness" is the way this word is often translated in the Old Testament. Is Habakkuk saying that a person has life and is righteous before God through his own faithful actions?

No. It's clear that this is not a statement of how we gain life with God through our good actions. That would contradict what Habakkuk has just said about the person who is puffed up and so is not upright. If anything we do is involved in our righteousness, then pride will slip in. The context also makes this clear. The root of this word has already been used

in Habakkuk 1:5, where it is translated "believe." The prophet is speaking of a revelation that is delayed (2:2-3), but will surely come, so it's not the righteous person's faithfulness that is in view, but their faith.

Paul begins his quotation of this phrase with, "as it is written," implying that his words are in perfect accord with what Habakkuk said. And there are clear connections in language with Genesis 15:6, which Paul also refers to, where it speaks of Abraham believing God and his faith being reckoned to him as righteousness.

So this obscure verse in Habakkuk becomes a source of great hope for us—the sum of the gospel. Luther said, "By the one solid rock which we call the doctrine of justification, we maintain that we are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil and are made partakers of life eternal, not by ourselves ... but by help from without, by the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ. The article of justification, which is our only protection against all the powers and plotting of men, and the gates of hell, is this: by faith alone in Christ, without works, are we

declared just and saved" (*What Luther Says*, Concordia, vol. 2, p. 701).

There's nothing we can do to qualify for heaven. In ourselves we're disqualified. But God provided the way for us to "live"—live spiritually, eternally with God. It is through the gift of the righteousness of Christ, and it is received by faith.

Johnson serves Calvary Free Lutheran, Fergus Falls, Minn.

DISCOVERS THE GOSPEL

By Dr. Wayne Juntunen

od is always in charge of anything and everything that happens in our lives, whether we realize it or not. Quite likely all of us have had life-changing events: some catastrophic, some exhilarating,

some hardly noticeable but, nonetheless, each has had an impact upon us. Luther had several.

One life-changing event occurred when Luther was 21 years of age. He was studying to be a lawyer. On a sultry July day, returning to the University of Erfurt, he was caught in a horrific thunderstorm. A bolt of lightning struck nearby, sending Luther to his knees crying out: "St. Anne, help me! I will become a monk." Two weeks later, Luther forsook the world and entered a monastery named for St. Augustine, taking on the rigorous life of a monk.

Luther had much to learn. The process of disposing errant, preconceived ideas and possessing biblical-based truth took time, a fact of which we are all aware, as Solomon wrote: "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven ..." (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Three ideas needing to be discarded by Luther were his concept of the righteousness of God, repentance, and justification.

St. Augustine possessed great spiritual insight and wisdom, and we can hold him in high regard. But his view of the righteousness of God is not as true to Scripture as Luther understood when he came to his mature period of spiritual growth. Augustine's writings on God's righteousness are duplicitous. On the one hand, he taught that the righteousness of God is that with which He endows man when He justifies the ungodly. On the other hand, he taught that this "righteousness is not complete, but is rather a gradual process of becoming righteous in which the renewed will of man cooperates with the grace of God." God's righteousness, in this sense, is an active righteousness. The energizing drive to "acquire" the righteousness of God, according to Augustine, was the Holy Spirit who provides the needed grace of God to place one's trust in God by faith.

Luther, driven by a passion to please God, carried the exercises and requirements of a monk to an extreme. He exercised the "spiritual disciplines" befitting one who was doing his utmost to "acquire God's righteousness." No matter how much he did and how faithfully he fulfilled his duties,

he sensed no peace with God. Quoting Luther from Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara's book, Luther Discovers the Gospel, he said: "As a monk I led an irreproachable life. Nevertheless I felt that I was a sinner before God. My conscience was restless, and I could not depend on God being propitiated by my satisfactions. Not only did I not love, but I actually hated the righteous God who punishes sinners ..."

Before Luther's concept of "the righteousness of God" could be changed, his belief in the nature of repentance needed alteration. Help for Luther was provided through Johan von Staupitz. Luther had been sent to the University of Wittenberg to teach, where Staupitz was the vicar. Luther's sins tormented him, and no matter how meticulously he confessed them, he sensed his repentance was incomplete. Luther's spiritual eyes were opened through Staupitz who taught, "... repentance is not genuine unless it begins with a love of righteousness and God ... and that what the torturers consider to be the end and consummation of repentance is rather its beginning." This spurred Luther to search the Scriptures. The Greek New Testament, published in February 1516, gave Luther a key regarding repentance. The Greek word was a combination of meta (with) and noia (mind); hence, metanoia, "coming to one's right mind again." This was the beginning of Luther's spiritual rebirth. Now this wordrepentance—became to him a

most sweet and pleasant word because the emphasis was not placed on a person's actions but upon the grace of God as not only the fact of repentance, but also the method of the change.

Luther still did not possess a personal certainty of the forgiveness of God until late in October or early November of 1512 when he was granted grace to believe the word of absolution declared to him by Staupitz. Nonetheless, the evangelical insight into justification was not yet fully grasped by Luther. Although assured of God's forgiveness, Luther still struggled with the concept of the "righteousness of God." Though forgiven, he could not consider himself as righteous in the sight of God, or justified.

Luther was especially trying to come to grips with the phrase, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). As evident in his lectures on Romans during the 1515-16 period, Luther struggled with the Augustinian concept of justification as a process of being made righteous. Finally toward the end of 1518, the Holy Spirit revealed to Luther that righteousness is not an "acquired" righteousness, rather, an "imputed" righteousness. In this revelation described as Luther's "Tower Experience," Luther discovered the gospel. Or perhaps Luther might say, "The full Gospel was revealed to me!"

Juntunen, a retired AFLC pastor, lives in Esko, Minn.



By Sarah Nelson

OTHER LUTHER

K

atherine Von Bora Luther, the wife of Martin Luther, did not begin her life with dreams of being a pastor's wife. Her early years held several difficult circumstances. God used those trials for His glory, not

only in the personal lives of Katherine and her future husband, Martin, but indeed for generations of people yet to come.

Katie (one of several nicknames for Katherine) was born in 1499 in Lippendor, Germany, to a family of noble, although not wealthy, origins. Her mother passed away when Katie was just a young girl. She was sent at age 5 to a Benedictine cloister to attend school. At age 9, Katie entered the Marinenthron Convent in Nimbschen. Although this may seem a harsh fate for a young motherless girl, being a nun was viewed as a holy calling, as was marriage—the two options available for young ladies.

During her years at the convent, Katherine learned many skills that would one day be utilized in her ministry to her husband, family, and many guests who would frequent the Luther home. She became proficient at cooking, gardening, and herbal medicine. An additional blessing was that Katherine learned to do what many women of the time were not allowed to do—to read. She used her knowledge to read the Bible in both Latin and later in German.

It was during Katherine's

early teen years that she first heard of her future husband, Martin Luther. His reputation as a priest who challenged the doctrines of the Catholic Church intrigued her. One of Katherine's fellow nuns, Magdalene von Staupitz, had received some of Luther's writings and shared them with a small group of women, including Katherine. As they read Luther's words, the stirring of the Spirit began, and they asked God to show them the way out from their old life and into the new. Luther, upon receiving communication of the nuns' desire to escape, arranged for a councilor from the city of Torgau to smuggle the women away in his delivery wagon. I wonder if they ever thought it would include being smuggled out of the convent among herring barrels. That, indeed, was the means of escape God provided Easter Eve of 1523. Luther not only aided in the liberation of this group of women, but took it upon himself to find secure placements through marriages or places of employment.

Katherine enjoyed working in the homes of two families before she became Mrs. Martin Luther. Martin was not her first suitor, however. She had two other prospects of marriage, but neither was to her liking. In June 1525 Martin and Katherine were wed. A practical marriage at first soon was known for its deep love. So thrilled was Martin with the blessing of Katie in his life, he dubbed her "Katie, My Rib." During their 21 years of marriage, God entrusted the couple with six children by birth as well as four orphaned children to raise and guide.

Luther was made a better man due to his union with Katie. His physical, emotional, and spiritual life was enriched by her presence. The medicinal knowledge she had was used to treat his many health troubles. Her industrious work ethic lent itself to the orderly running of their home, the family finances (not Luther's strong suit), and several businesses, including a farm and a brewery. When Luther struggled with bouts of depression, she was there, a faithful companion ministering to him through the reading of the Word and prayer.

The union of Martin and Katherine Luther marked the establishment of the first Lutheran parsonage. The Luthers' home was a 40-room former monastery that housed not only their family, but many boarding students as well. Their house was known to be a warm, cheerful place where the sound of music and lively debate could

be heard. The parsonage also housed moments of sorrow due to the deaths of two beloved children. The grief they knew at such a deep level proved to deepen their already strong bond to one another and to the Lord.

Luther went to his heavenly home in 1546 after a life filled with battles of every kind. Katherine was left behind in difficult financial straits. She lived her last days in Wittenberg until an outbreak of the Black Plague caused her to flee for safety. Falling from a wagon, she was seriously injured and never recovered. Katherine, on her deathbed, was reported to have said, "I will stick to Christ as a burr to cloth." This proclamation of her love and faith in Christ will be her most important legacy. Her love for family, friends, the hurt and broken, were only reflections of her love for the Savior. Martin helped set her free from a life of seclusion. Christ set her free from the bonds of sin and death. Blessed be the memory of Katherine Von Bora Luther.

Nelson is a busy stay-at-home mom and wife of Pastor David Nelson, who serves Redeemer Free Lutheran, Ontogagon, Mich. Together they served as AFLC missionaries to Brazil and Portugal.

New book reflects on Lutheran revival leaders

Ι

t can sometimes be difficult to describe the feeling you get when you know something new is coming. You don't know for sure when it will come. In my situation I can simply describe my feeling

as excited. I was excited for a new book to be released.

No, it wasn't the latest release by Ted Dekker. It was a new book from our very own Ambassador Publications—the third volume in the AFLC Heritage Series, They Lived in the Power of God: Lutheran Revival Leaders in Northern Europe. Being a lover of history, specifically Lutheran church history, I couldn't wait for this volume to be released.

As I read the pages of this book it seemed as though I was taking a journey through history. The book is full of historical accounts of early Lutheran revival leaders. In it, the reader is transported through many centuries and numerous accounts of how God uses unlikely individuals to accomplish His work.

Early on, I was struck by the notion that some of the same things that occurred at the time of Christ have been repeated throughout history. Specifically I noticed this in the chapter on Philipp Jakob Spener. Acts 14:4 says, "But the people of the city were divided; and some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles." Events similar

to this were taking place in Germany regarding the pietistic movement. God can use times such as these to cause us to draw nearer to Him, and I pray that we always strive to do that.

The chapter on Spener also reminded me that we in the AFLC are truly heirs to some of the beliefs of the revival leaders of centuries ago. In this chapter the statement is made, "Spener believed the doctrine of the Lutheran church to be scriptural." Many of the fundamental principles of the AFLC contain the words, "according to the Word of God." It is my prayer that we continue to uphold the Word as the absolute and complete truth and the basis for all our beliefs—without twisting it to suit us. Only then will we be scriptural Lutheran congregations.

The chapter on Pehr Brandell contains an incident that many pastors may face today. "Upon arrival in Nora, Brandell observed that it was not a field ripe for the harvest but rather like an uncultivated filed covered with weeds and thistles." As I read this, I immediately thought of our Home Mission work and how often these new congregations begin out of much hurt and anger from their former congregations. May we be in fervent prayer for these individuals and situations that the Spirit of God would constantly be at work.

Brandell's biography also brought to mind how God has used many individuals to influence people both directly and indirectly. This statement closes out this chapter, "... this servant of God was not only the human 'father' of the revival of Ångermandland, but indirectly also of two other great awakenings—the Rosenian and Laestadian revivals." I will leave it to the individual to read and find out more about this.

Being of Norwegian descent, I cannot help but say a few words on the section dealing with Norway and its revival leaders. Almost every time I read about Hans Nielsen Hauge I find it so amazing how God brings individuals to saving faith in the most unlikely places. Hauge was plowing a field on the family farm when he was brought to faith. As Hauge was singing the hymn, "O Lord, how long will You hide Your face from me?" he was transformed and "... received a new understanding ... that Christ has come to be our Savior in order that we would be born again of His Spirit, be converted and sanctified ever more unto godliness, to serve the Triune God who purified our souls and prepares them for eternal blessedness." Amazing.

As a general observance for this entire volume I find it wonderful that many of the sketches of these individuals contain actual accounts written by them. I believe that God allows certain things to be preserved for a reason, and I am encouraged by the personal accounts of these men who truly did live in the power of God.

I encourage all who read this brief review to consider reading this latest volume in the Heritage Series. It is my prayer that God will use these accounts to encourage and build many up in their faith in the years to come.

I, along with countless others, am greatly indebted to the individuals who put so much time and effort into making this book a reality. Thank you! We must thank God for putting it on the heart of Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara to compose these biographies. To God be the glory!

Larson, a 2009 graduate of AFLBS, is from Osakis, Minn.
They Lived in the Power of God:
Lutheran Revival Leaders in
Northern Europe is available from Ambassador Publications.

LIVING IN GOD'S POWER By Tim Larson





THANKFUIN

By Jim Berge

an we be thankful in our trials and distress? I am not sure. I am not even sure what I think about distress. I think it depends on how we define it. I know that God allows each of us to have certain

things that need dealing with. Things that can't be ignored. Things that change us and cause us to think and act differently. Things that will not be "beyond what we can bear," and "He will provide a way out" (I Corinthians 10:12-14).

I was diagnosed with Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis in November 2007. My life changed that day. It made me realize that I either claim the verses in Corinthians or I don't. It was one of those "Is your faith real?" moments. I don't remember standing in line and signing up for this MS gig. I questioned my ability to actually be thankful for the lessons that God was teaching me. I decided that God would have to help me get my mind around these verses and help me live it. God did help me; I did gain some peace about

And then ... "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything"

(James 1:2-4).

C'mon ... joy? Really? Do I want to be mature?

I struggled with these verses off and on, realizing that wrestling with God is a no-win competition. He is right. All the time. He doesn't just think He is right (like me), He is right. It was time to find some different verses. I looked for all the healing verses I could find. What I found interesting is that God doesn't promise healing. In fact, God doesn't promise an easy life at all. All of those closest to Iesus suffered. What God does promise is that I will be well. that I will have peace. Didn't I say that I didn't want to be mature?

Do I wish I had my old body back? You bet. Do I wish I could run? Still can.

If I am going to believe the above verses are for me (and I do), then what do I do with

I Corinthians 9:24? "In a race everyone runs but only one person gets the prize. So run your race to win."

I have a race? I'm supposed to run? I'm supposed to win? Yup. So are you.

We each have a race that we need to run. We aren't called to run just so we can say we ran, we are supposed to run to win. There isn't a special verse for non-runners. The Bible doesn't say to find a substitute to run for you if running is hard. These verses are for me. I have a race.

I used to participate in triathlons in my pre-MS body. A lifetime ago I used to race. I changed from racing to participating when cracking the top ten was no longer a rational thought. My wife, Gwen, and I would sign up for an event just for incentive to stay active and somewhat in shape (she still does). Now I have a race again; I am called to run.

Those of you who know me, or have seen me, know that the picture of me running is not a pretty one. More like a bad accident. But I am supposed to run, the Bible tells me so. We each have our individual race, so run vour race to win.

I am thankful for all the gifts God has given me: my beautiful wife and three great kids. I'm thankful that God has given me such a great family. I love them so much I can't get depressed. I can't throw a pity

party and force them to come along; love and thankfulness doesn't do that. I am also thankful for my extended Christian family and all of your prayers and support for our family. I am thankful for how MS has changed the way I try to live. I can't say that I am grateful for MS and am glad I was diagnosed. I can say that I now try to seize the day for the Lord, because what I can physically do today may not be a possibility tomorrow. I believe that God doesn't ask us to be thankful for each trial, but to praise Him because He is with us in the trials. "I will never leave you or forsake you" is a theme repeated often in the Bible. I am thankful for the promises that I can count on.

I am not smart enough to understand all of the movements in this symphony. I don't need to. I serve a great God. He loves me. He died for me. He wants me to run and He promises that I will be well. I may always have MS, but I can still be well.

I'm thankful that God has given me the ability to run and be used by Him. We can be thankful despite our trials and our distress.

Berge is a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

By Avis Dyrud



raise Him, Praise Him, all ye little children," we sang in Sunday school at Trinity Lutheran Free Church in Minneapolis when I was young. It was a simple song with a simple concept: praise Him. Since

then, many praise songs and hymns have been filed away in my memory bank. But most likely, many of us who sang that children's song did not understand what praise was. Our prayers were short and held requests for help in school, safety in travel, or healing for sick family members, with only a few words of thanks and praise added.

In contrast to my childhood prayer, when I pray now, I try to remember to praise God first, even before thanking Him for His blessings. And it's hard to do because my endless requests and intercessions always threaten to crowd out the words of praise and thanksgiving. To praise God calls for great self-discipline in prayer.

Praise is the focus of
Psalm 150, a doxology which
brings the entire book of Psalms
to an ending of extravagant
praise. In writing, we use exclamation points for emphasis,
and that's what the writer of this
Psalm did. We can only imagine
his frustration when trying to
get his message across through

the words he wrote. He used eight exclamation points for six verses.

This Psalm gives us an outline for praise using the categories often used by writers and reporters: where, what, how and who.

Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens! (v. 1)

WHERE: To praise Him "in His sanctuary" implies we should praise Him where we gather to worship—in our assembled congregations, in our Bible study groups, and in our homes. Of course, we can praise Him everywhere and anywhere—walking in the woods,

shopping for groceries, sitting or lying in a hospital room, or waiting at a stop sign. But our human voices are feeble, so the heavenly host helps us, and they praise Him in "His mighty heavens."

Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! (v. 2)

WHAT: Praise calls for a concentrated focus on God and who He is—the Creator, Redeemer, the great I AM. Verse two reminds us to "Praise Him for His mighty deeds" and "praise Him for His excellent greatness." Those mighty deeds extend from creating the world, to making a path through the Red Sea, to sending His Son to this world to live, die, and rise again. But those mighty deeds are also happening every day the Spirit touches and moves in a human heart.

Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with lute and harp!

Praise Him with tambourine and dance; praise Him with strings and pipe!

Praise Him with sounding cymbals; praise Him with loud clashing cymbals! (v. 3-5)

HOW: We should praise God with abandon, holding nothing back. We as human



beings try so hard to praise with our voices as we speak and pray. We also try to make a joyful noise with our voices through singing. But this Psalm declares even our voices cannot do justice in praising Him. So we take manmade instruments—trumpet, lute, harp, tambourine, stringed instruments, wind instruments, and lots of clanging cymbals—to try to enlarge our praise. What



a scene of constant motion and sound. So we praise Him with our breath and our voices and many musical instruments, but as we live Spirit-filled lives, we also praise Him when we live in joyful obedience to Him. For the Christian, all of life is an act of worship and praise.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! (v. 6) WHO It calls for "everything that has breath" to praise Him. That would include all Israel, all people, and all animals. All creation should praise Him. In Revelation 6:9, we read how the great multitude from every nation, tribe, and people worship Him.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, an English poet, praises God for His creation in his poem "Pied [variegated] Beauty," which lists many colorful things in nature such as cows, trout, finches, and landscapes that praise Him with the beauty God gave them. The poem ends with praising God "whose beauty is past change. Praise Him!"

In this season of giving thanks, let's preface our thanks with praise to God. Then by God's grace, let's praise Him in our praying, our singing, and our living. Let's be extravagant in our praise to our God who lavishes His blessings on us. Let's put first things first.

Dyrud is a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn.

Remember those who gave

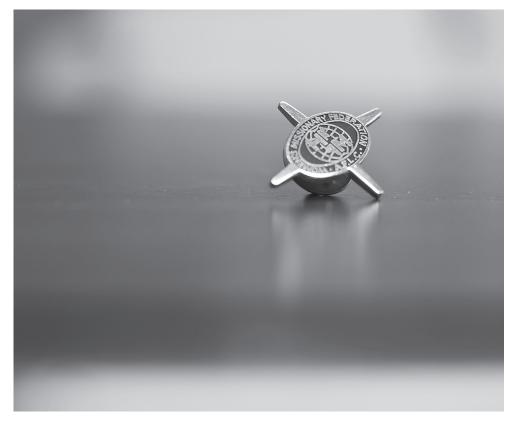
BY LORILEE MUNDFROM

he Women's Missionary
Federation of the AFLC
encourages the women of our
churches to honor women
who have labored in the
congregation and in the WMF. There are
actually two special programs that are
available through which these women can
be honored.

The first program is Honorary Membership. This program honors a WMF member for faithful service. It is good to have an Honorary Membership pin on hand to give this honored lady. These can be ordered from our national treasurer, Lois Grothe, for \$13.

Bestowing an Honorary Membership on an honoree often happens in a special service. The specifics of the service are the responsibility of the local WMF. The focus of the program should be celebrating the women who are being honored. The program should be short, but should specifically recognize the gifts this honoree has brought to the WMF. Your program can be elaborate or very simple. Scripture verses related to honoring women who have used their gifts in service to the Lord should be included in the service. Special decorations or flowers and candles can be used to enhance the beauty of the service. There can be music, as well. Past programs can be found in previous years' resource packets produced by the WMF. Your president or a previous officer should have access to this information. If you would like a format for that program, please contact our executive secretary, Dawn Johnson, and she will send you a copy of a program.

The second way we honor women in the WMF is the "In Memoriam" program. This program honors those WMF women who have passed away in the preceding



year. At each WMF convention we have a special service where we honor WMF women from various churches around the country who have passed away the previous year. While at times a somber service, we can rejoice that these women have passed on to eternal glory. And we can rejoice in the work they did for the Lord while they were here on earth.

A memorial gift can be given to a favorite project of that person. A simple flower bouquet and/or candles can be used to make this a special program. If you would like a format for this program, contact Dawn Johnson.

If you need to order an honorary membership pin, contact Lois Grothe,

WMF Treasurer, at 3745 Franklin Avenue, Astoria, OR 97103-2514. Please send the check for the payment for the pin when you send her the order.

If you need to get a copy of one of these programs, please contact Dawn Johnson, WMF Executive Secretary, at 2991 30th Avenue, Wilson, WI 54027-2422. Her e-mail address is: wmf.es@aflc.org.

"I always thank God for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus" (I Corinthians 1:4).

Mundfrom is the president of the Women's Missionary Federation.



"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

hink of the many people we meet in our home, the office, the farm and elsewhere. We may be their only contact with Christianity and the Word of God. What do they see in us? What are they reading in the Gospel "according to you"?

Luther tells us that because we have laid hold upon Christ by faith, through whom we have been made righteous, we should love God and our neighbor, call upon God, give thanks unto Him, praise Him, confess Him, and good works can flow out of this faith as well as cheerfulness in the heart.

A long-faced Christian going about doing good works certainly will find his good works unappreciated and very seldom effective.

The joy in a Christian's life should manifest itself not just when the sun shines but also through adversity.

We have been promised that if we follow Christ we will have that light which shines before men; and only when we first have that light will our good works glorify God.

What an opportunity and challenge it is for each one of us to let our light shine for Jesus in our daily lives. We should be floodlights for Him. Floodlights do not call attention to themselves, but to the object they illuminate. The all-important concern of every born-again Christian should be, "Let your light so shine before men

By Mrs. James Eletson, Duluth, Minn.

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

People and Places

Members of Faith Free Lutheran. Bertrand, Neb., celebrated the congregation's 10th anniversary on Oct. 2.

Scott Stroud has accepted a call to serve St. Ansgar's Lutheran, Salinas, Calif., as pastor of family and youth. Stroud will finish his seminary internship in December and will begin work at St. Ansgar's in January.

Members of **Dell Lutheran**, Frost, Minn., celebrated the congregation's 150th anniversary on Oct. 2.

Pastor Randy Nelson was installed as pastor at Peace Lutheran, St. Francis, Kan., on Sept. 11. Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC president, officiated at the service.

ARC to host **Christmas Festival event**

The Association Retreat Center. Osceola, Wis., has planned a Christmas Festival event for Friday and Saturday, Dec. 9-10. Featured during the two-day event will be a music and drama, "The Christmas Boy," which will revisit the true meaning of Christmas through the music of Steve Gamble. Performances will be held at 7 p.m. Dec. 9 and 3 and 7 p.m. Dec. 10.

The Christmas Festival will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. in Dec. 10 and will include a holiday bake sale, an arts and crafts festival, games, hayrides and a Christmas praise concert from 6 to 6:30 p.m. A registration form is available for those who wish to apply as arts and crafts vendors.

The ARC will open up housing for those who wish to attend both days. The cost is \$25/person with a maximum of \$100/family. Included in the price is breakfast.

All funds raised through this event will be used to support the ministry of the ARC.

For more information on this event, contact the ARC by e-mail at arcregistration@centurytel.net or call 800-294-2877, or visit the ARC Web site at www. arc-aflc.org.

Tanner, Berger work in Ugandan village



Micah Berger (left) and Hans Tanner work in a swamp to plant rice in a rural village in Uganda.

ecently, Micah [Berger] and I have spent more time out in the village than we have in town [Jinja, Uganda] with the Jores [Pastor Nate and Rhoda and their family].

During our recent stints in the village, Micah and I have been doing a lot of physical work alongside the spiritual work. Our main hope for the villagers we live next to is that they would glorify God by placing their faith in Him. We know that we are called to live our lives in the light of Christ right next to them. That means digging a swamp for planting rice, ripping our pants while planting beans, and processing harvested maize with the villagers. It's not the easiest work, but it is so good and so rewarding. We love to tear down the Muzungu (white person) image that they have as we eat the same food they eat, and as we speak the same language they speak—this is most definitely

a work in progress. Work is so much better when it is done for His glory, not your own. That is just one of the lessons He has been teaching me about work.

Because the most natural way for Ugandans to learn is orally, we will be sharing with them in the way that is most natural to them—through a listening group. To what will they be listening? The Word of God. Anyone interested is welcome. We will have to wait, pray, and see how many come. After listening to the Word of God, we are going to discuss it. The program will not be at all dependent upon any missionary. Instead, it will be a locally sustainable, culturally relevant way to receive the Word of God and grow in faith. We are excited to see where this goes.

By Hans Tanner, a 2010 AFLBS graduate from Sioux Falls, S.D.

AFLC departments benefit from LCF grant

The AFLC recently received a grant totalling \$56,175.24 from the Lutheran Community Foundation (LCF). The grant was made possible through the generosity of an LCF donor who established the Myrtle, Thelma and Gladys Johnson Fund, a charitable fund of the LCF.

Departments benefitting from this grant include the Association Retreat Center (\$1,123.50), Evangelism (\$2,247.01), Parish Education (\$2,247.01), AFLTS, AFLBS, World Missions and Home Missions (each receiving \$11,235.05), and the AFLC Foundation (\$5,617.52).



BY PASTOR WADE MOBLEY

"Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, or 'The just by faith shall live" (Galatians 3:11).

eggieTales creator Phil Vischer wants you to learn a tough lesson through him: "After the bankruptcy [which came from trying to 'build the next Disney'] I had kind of a forced sabbatical of three or four months of spending time with God and listening to Him. I looked back at the previous 10 years and realized I had spent 10 years trying to convince kids to behave like a Christian without actually teaching them Christianity. And that was a pretty serious conviction. You can say, 'Hey kids, be more forgiving because the Bible says so,' or 'Hey kids, be more kind because the Bible says so!' But that isn't Christianity, it's morality" (World magazine, Sept. 24, 2011).

On occasion I've been known to talk to tomatoes, and a squash, indeed, can make me smile. But the morality-without-the-cross teaching of *VeggieTales* always rubbed me the wrong way. It also convicted me.

How many times have I taught people to behave in a certain way at the expense of showing them their behavior—good or bad—could only condemn them and never save them? It is especially tempting when teaching youths; youths who behave well are way more fun to be with. Now, good behavior and genuine faith certainly are not mutually exclusive, but if my desire to make them easier to be around outpaces my desire to see them saved, I err.

I remember reading a gem by C. O. Rosenius (*A Faithful Guide to Peace with God*). The gospel sounded so free—too free, in fact: What if people think this is their license to sin? After some

wrestling, I asked a couple of trusted mentors. Their predictable response? "Yes, it really is *that* free."

The gospel, if preached correctly, comes with no strings attached. It *does* sound too free. And indeed, if an unregenerate soul wants to misappropriate the gospel without conviction of sin, he will do so repeatedly and without hesitation. Mankind—whether by trying to keep God's law or lowering the standard of God's holiness so we can attain it—has been working his way to God through the law since the Garden of Eden. We will continue to do so until Christ returns. It will never work.

But adding a little law to the gospel isn't spice—it's poison. We must, in personal application or teaching of others, use the law lawfully. God's law convicts; it never acquits: "The law is not of faith, rather, the one who does them shall live by them" (Galatians 3:12). God's law used lawfully kills us and drives us to the cross, where the gospel gives to us faith and eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One who cherishes the gospel will never use it as a covering for evil. The prisoner who has been granted freedom would never use that freedom as an opportunity to go back to his captivity.

The gospel that saves us will also sanctify us: "The just by faith shall live." It really is *that* free.

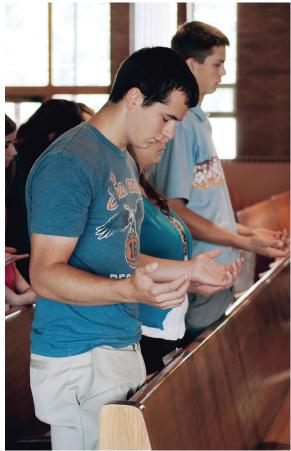
Mobley, who serves Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., is a member of the AFLC Youth Board.



AFLC Schools host Revival Conference

The AFLC Schools hosted the annual Revival Conference September 25-29 on the campus in Plymouth, Minn. The conference consisted of nightly prayer groups followed by a service with Pastor Dana Coyle, Sheridan, Ill., (above) speaking.

The schools also hosted daily chapel services, with Pastor Jack Aamot (far right) speaking at some of the services. Students (Luke Westlake pictured near right) were challenged to consider the "Rough Embrace of God."





Underestimated value

BY PASTOR DEL PALMER

s director of AFLC World Missions, I am responsible for conveying the decisions of the World Missions Committee to our missionaries. Sometimes those decisions bear good news, sometimes they contain bad news, and sometimes they are unexpected. Recently, members of the World Missions Committee decided to offer our missionaries' children a substantial scholarship to AFLBS. When I called one of the missionaries to explain the scholarship, the missionary was not home. The missionary's child, who is now attending AFLBS, answered the phone and I explained the scholarship to her. The news was totally unexpected and the student was overwhelmed with emotion. There was absolute silence on the phone for at least 30 seconds. She knew the value of Bible school, she knew the value of the

scholarship, and she was speechless.

• Spiritual value

Many people underestimate the spiritual value of our Bible school. The Word of God gives and deepens faith. Studies show 60-88 percent of Christian students entering college walk away from their faith. With eternity in view, nothing can be more valuable than being grounded in God's Word.

• Life value

Many people underestimate the life value of our Bible school. Leaving home

and venturing out into the world is a big step. Our Bible school offers a transition where young people can learn to live in a positive and godly environment. Many people go to school to learn how to make a living, AFLBS teaches students how to live.

• Financial value

Many people underestimate the financial value of our Bible school. It's expensive to go to school, but AFLBS is a real value. Recently a study was made on the cost of attending various schools. Following is a chart of what was found:

ion Room/H	Board Total
\$4,000	\$8,500
\$5,180	\$19,600
\$7,380	\$28,850
\$8,000	\$33,490
\$7,500	\$36,000
\$8,000	\$37,850
\$5,620	\$17,290
	\$4,000 \$5,180 \$70 \$7,380 \$90 \$8,000 \$7,500 \$320 \$8,000

Several of these schools accept the credits from our Bible school. Many students attend AFLBS for two years at the inexpensive rate and then finish their four-year degree at one of the Christian colleges.

Members of the World Missions Committee fully understand

the value of our Bible school and decided to help our missionaries' children with a \$4,000-per-year scholarship. They understand the spiritual, life and financial values of AFLBS. The committee members also understand the value of having our missionaries' children on campus at AFLBS. They are a great influence for other students. Unfortunately, most missionaries, like most pastors, cannot afford to help their children with higher education. Many churches have scholarships for their members



to attend AFLBS. Missionary students don't normally have this opportunity. Therefore, committee members decided to help the children of missionaries.

Would you be willing to help sponsor a missionary student or give to the scholarship fund? Please send your gifts to: AFLC World Missions, C/O AFLBS Missionary Children's Scholarship Fund, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Palmer is the director of AFLC World Missions.

Devakaruna Dasari was wife of former seminary instructor

Devakaruna Dasari, 69, of Guntur, India, died Sept. 1 in India. Dasari was the wife of Pastor Bhushana Rao Dasari. former instructor at the Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Dasari was born Sept. 22, 1941, in Arumbaka, India, to Isaac and Rebecca Devarapalli. While attending the local Christian school, she learned of God's love for her and responded to that faith. She attended the Christian Boarding School

in Repalle. She married Rao Dasari on April 22, 1961. She taught elementary school in Hyderabad. They moved to the United States, living in Philadelphia and St. Louis before moving to Plymouth, Minn., where he taught at the seminary and Bible School. She became a U.S. citizen in 1983. She returned to Guntur in 1995, where she ran the Moriah Children's Home and Moriah Christian School. Following her husband's death, she continued to work at

the home and school, as well as Bible Faith Lutheran Church.

Surviving are her mother, Rebecca Devarapalli; two sons, David (Suchi) Dasari, and Paul (Jennifer) Dasari; one daughter, Esther (Matthew) Dale; one brother, Nageswara Rao (Padmaja) Devarapalli; and nine grandchildren.

The service was held Sept. 10 at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, Plymouth.

AFLC memorials: September

AFLBS

Ruth Claus Arnie Kooiman **Dorothy Mindermann** Selma Nikunen Lyell Johnson (3) Pastor Ed Kjos Herbert Kallevig Ray Gassman

AFLTS

Wes Ulvestad Barbara Doolittle Lily Johnson **David Wheeler** Selma Nikunen (2) Calvin Baier Harold Snipstead

General Fund

Selma Nikunen (2)

Home Missions

Noren Ellingson Keith Nash Lvell Johnson Selma Nikunen **Donald King**

Parish Education

Pastor Merle Knutson

World Missions

Lawrence Bottolfson Donald Jan Karuna Dasari Jim Taylor Selma Nikunen

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Sept. 30, 2011				
FUND	REC'D IN SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE	
General Fund	\$25,114	\$215,403	\$236,746	
Evangelism	14,617	85,584	99,122	
Youth Ministries	9,492	89,650	101,654	
Parish Education	8,977	90,557	79,439	
Seminary	18,790	157,779	144,523	
Bible School	29,306	349,956	332,273	
Home Missions	33,299	320,755	345,592	
World Missions	31,312	306,940	210,058	
Personal Support	34,401	280,807	242,638	
TOTALS	\$205,309	\$1,897,431	\$1,792,046	

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

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Avg. copies each issue during past year:

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Publication is required and will be printed in the November 2011 issue of the Lutheran Ambassador.

/s/ Ruth Gunderson, Managing Editor

Circulation concerns

oes anyone read it?" asked a pastor from another denomination when I told him that I was currently serving as editor of our church magazine. He was speaking with an awareness that the circulation of similar publications has plummeted in recent years.

It was good to be able to assure him that *The Lutheran Ambassador* has a family of faithful readers who wait for each issue to arrive. Some may recall the lady who spoke to a resolution during an annual conference several years ago, when she described the magazine as "a letter from home." But the fact remains that our family of faithful readers is shrinking.

In 1992 when I previously served as



Pastor Robert Lee

editor, the statement of circulation totaled 5,480. Currently we have 3,034 subscribers. The AFLC has grown during these years to include more than 270 congregations, but only

129 of them have a group of subscribers. Several others receive a bulk order every month.

There are a number of reasons to which one might point as an explanation for the decline. The number of older members who still see the paper as "a letter from home" is shrinking every year. Perhaps some on fixed or limited incomes may find it hard to justify the subscription cost. The number of subscribers dropped when the WMF stopped including their monthly Bible studies in the magazine, choosing instead to publish them in a separate booklet. Also, several of our common endeavors (missions, schools, etc.) produce their own promotional newsletters or connect with their constituency via the

internet. Congregations have other worthy priorities to fund instead of providing subscriptions for their members.

Is there anything that can be done to stem the downward slide, or is it inevitable?

There are two blessings that *The Lutheran Ambassador* offers which cannot be acquired elsewhere. The first is a regular flow of devotional and theological articles written by our own people, both lay and clergy. There is good food for the soul to be found in each issue that you won't find anywhere else, and our congregations would be strengthened if more people par-

took of this nourishment. We are always open to new writers, by the way, and appreciate the suggestions of readers when they provide us with names of potential authors.

The second blessing is the news from our congregations. Some have suggested that this is an area that might be strengthened, and to do so will require the assistance of our fam-

ily of readers. There are some news items, of course, that may be of concern only to a specific community, so they would not be appropriate to include in a national magazine. But it would be surprising if there were not events and accomplishments within our membership that all would find very interesting.

Plans are in process to highlight during the coming year our newer congregations, providing information both past and present that will help us become better acquainted with them. Your editorial staff will try to maintain close contact with the

AFLC offices so that the latest news might be published. Expect, too, that the year 2012 will include articles that celebrate our association's golden anniversary, which alone is an important reason for our pastors and congregations to encourage people to subscribe.

More progress will be made to address the new advances in technology used by our readership. *The Lutheran Ambassador* has a Facebook page, for those who use social networking, and it would be appreciated if you would "friend" our magazine. The AFLC internet home page includes a link for interested "surfers" to read one of

Offer for new subscribers

The Coordinating Committee recently voted to offer a one-year subscription to The Lutheran Ambassador for 2012 for new subscribers at half the regular rate. This would be a great opportunity for our regular readers to order gift subscriptions for some who might not be acquainted with the magazine, especially during the coming golden anniversary year.

our articles. (Someone asked if we have an "app," and this editor replied that we may get one when he finds out what they are!)

The publishing of *The Lutheran Ambassador* is ultimately a spiritual venture, of course, not merely a commercial one controlled by the ups and downs of circulation, and we are grateful to God for every one of our readers. Yet the reality is that the church magazine of a growing church family should have a growing circulation, and our staff together with all AFLC ministries wants to do everything humanly possible to see that this happens.

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

Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

building the base

Change of seasons

BY PASTOR BRETT BOE

love the fall. Considering all of the transitions between the seasons, the change in weather that takes place between summer and winter is my personal favorite. During this change of seasons I have been thinking about clothes. One of the biggest reasons I love fall is because I am able to wear my favorite comfortable attire: hoodies and blue jeans. Gone are the days of summer in which shorts and t-shirts dominate my wardrobe. When it is time to relax and spend time with my family outdoors during the fall season, one can find me looking like New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick.

In a similar way to the changing of the seasons, the religious climate can change just as quickly. During the flow of Christian history, a type of "weather change" happened at the beginning of the Reformation. As an often-portrayed hoodie-wearing Martin Luther pounded those 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, winds of change began to blow. The title of one of Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara's books fittingly sums up the doctrinal shift of that time: *Luther Discovers the Gospel*. It was the re-discovery of the gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ that spawned this great movement for which we are extremely thankful. It is proper and good to thank the Lord for using Luther in this way. Hopefully, as you read this issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*, thankfulness has been sparked in your heart for the Reformation.

All of these thoughts about weather and clothing draw my mind to Scripture verses in which the command, "clothe your-

selves," or the declaration, "you have been clothed," are used. The beauty of the imagery of these verses comes through as we read them. "Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5). "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

In the Book of Revelation God speaks to the lukewarm Laodiceans. Their situation was one in which they simply needed clothes, period. They were "neither hot nor cold" (Revelation 3:16). They would love a spiritual autumn in which the weather was neither hot nor cold. A typical person would say to the lukewarm Laodiceans, "What are you doing? Fire up!" But the next verses are surprising. For the Laodiceans (and for you and I) the solution is something totally different. Hear this beautiful gospel promise and be clothed, my friend. "I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see" (Revelation 3:18). The solution is the discovery of the same treasure that Martin Luther discovered those many years ago. It is the gospel.

Boe is the associate pastor of the Dalton, Minn., parish of Zion-Sarpsborg Lutheran, Kvam Free Lutheran and Tordenskjold Lutheran.