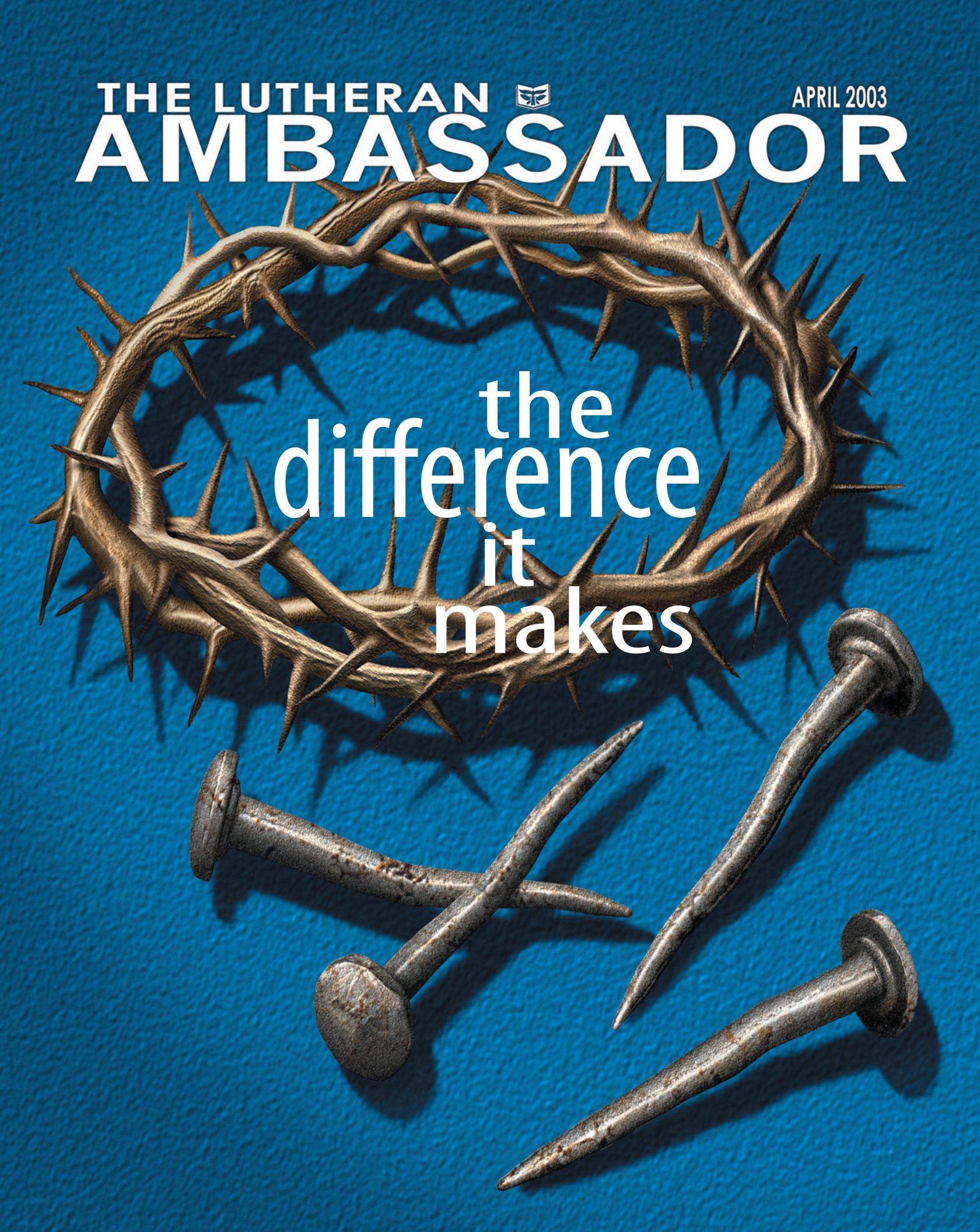


THE LUTHERAN  
**AMBASSADOR**

APRIL 2003

A crown of thorns and several rusty nails on a blue background.

the  
difference  
it  
makes

# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

April 2003  
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# Encouraging Word

## Singspiration

I serve as a chaplain at a long-term care facility. We have Bible study on each of the four floors each Wednesday. On the first Wednesday of each month we have a singspiration where the residents choose the songs they want to sing. It always amazes me that at Christmas time, they choose to sing "Beneath the Cross of Jesus" and "The Old Rugged Cross." This speaks to my heart of what is especially important to the residents, even at Christmas time. Many have suffered the loss of loved ones. They have lost possessions such as their homes and they still sing

"Beneath the cross of Jesus I long to take my stand," "I'll cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it someday for a crown."

So often we feel like we have to have certain things to enjoy life, and if we don't have those things, our life will be a failure. It only takes sickness to put our priorities back in order as to what is really important.

The truth of the matter is that unless we have the cross, we don't really have anything. But if we have the cross, if we have Jesus in our hearts and lives, we have everything. The magnificent reality is that we can have Jesus in our hearts as a gift. He wants to come and help us and provide for us every day if we will but allow Him to do this. Without Jesus, the cross and the resurrection, nothing else really matters because it is only temporary. Christmas would simply be a time to exchange gifts. Birthdays would simply be one day less of life. But

because of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, each day we live is one day closer to eternity in heaven.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in Me shall live even if they die and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die." Then Jesus asked a key question, "Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as the "assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Sometimes our eyes can only see the dark side of things, much like those at the crucifixion of Jesus. Yet, on Easter morning we see the rest of the story. It takes faith to get us through the dark times, faith that Jesus knows what He is doing and that He will indeed cause all things to work together for good as He promised.

If we believe these words of Jesus, then we have a living hope that will shine even as we pass through times of darkness. We have eternal life given to us by grace through faith alone as a gift from Jesus. We may experience some times of loss and darkness while we live on this Earth, but the best is yet to come. We have proof of this displayed by the power of God in the resurrection on Easter morning.

Our lives are in the hands of Jesus, and on the day and time of His choosing, He will bless you in ways that are far beyond your wildest imagination. Is it any wonder that the residents of Pleasant View Luther Home want to sing "Beneath the Cross of Jesus," "The Old Rugged Cross" and "Amazing Grace"? May we add to this list "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow." May God bless you with these words of hope and life.



Kerwin Sletto  
Ottawa, Ill.

# SOUND BITES

If my salvation was so costly and dear a price to Christ that He was constrained to die for my sins, then all my works, with all the righteousness of the law, are but vile and worth nothing in comparison with this inestimable price.

— Martin Luther  
“Commentary on Galatians”

The resurrection marks a new era. Heaven and earth are now joined, for Christ, our Savior, is risen. The wall of separation has fallen; God is reconciled to men; the sacrifice of the Son has been accepted by the Father. This is the supreme Easter reality.

— R. C. H. Lenski  
“The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel”

In our beautiful sanctuaries and comfortable pews, we tend to forget that His royal visage is marred and contorted beyond recognition. He who has never known even a moment’s fleeting whisper of personal guilt carries the guilt of every man, woman, and child who has every lived.

— W. Phillip Keller  
“A Layman Looks at the Lamb of God”

The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate sign that our salvation comes only when we cease trying to interpret Jesus’ story in the light of our history, and instead we interpret ourselves in the light of his.

— Stanley Hauerwas



# Through THE blood

Colossians 1:20:  
In this simple  
statement resides  
the heart and soul  
of Christian faith.

**A**dvent. Christmas. Lent. Easter. Pentecost. The church observes many seasons and many especially significant days. We are now approaching what is perhaps the single most important of those days — Easter. Unfortunately for many of us, Easter has lost its significance. As Christmas has become more secularized, so, too, has Easter become largely a secularized holiday of bunnies, scavenger hunts and family dinners at favorite restaurants. Easter has become one of two days during the entire year when many people actually set foot inside a church sanctuary. We too frequently forget what it is we are observing; we look at our watches wondering when the sermon will be done so that we can begin enjoying the day. Recognizing this complacency, it is important for us to take the time to briefly reacquaint ourselves with one of the things we are remembering on this day, to reacquaint ourselves with an aspect of Christ's Easter work that is discussed in Colossians 1:20.

“For it was the Father’s good pleasure through Him to reconcile *all things* to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (emphasis mine). In this simple statement resides what in many respects is the heart and soul of the Christian faith. Even though all



For it was the Father's good pleasure through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

— Colossians 1:19-20

trespasses against us (II Corinthians 5:19). We personally receive this objective reconciliation through the faith that is granted to us by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8).

In Colossians 1:20, we are presented with the images of crimson blood and a rough cross, two of the most potent of all Easter symbols. These images serve to explain how it is possible for God to have performed this fundamental, objective reconciliation and to have made this peace with all things without sacrificing His perfect holiness. The fact that reconciliation has occurred "through the blood of His cross" means that God has neither compromised His holiness nor disregarded our utter depravity in the working of this reconciliation. Our sins, both those that are inborn and those that are committed, have been judicially absolved.

Because the shedding of blood is necessary for the remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22; Leviticus 17:11), the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has been shed once and for all for our sins (Hebrews 9:12; 10:12). The fact is that God is not compromising His holiness when He accepts Christ's suffering and death as satisfaction for our sins. This is made evident in Romans 5:12-19, and especially in verse 18, which states, "As through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." God in His holiness must punish sin; let us praise His name, then, as we are told that Christ "suffered for [us] ... and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds [we] were healed" (I Peter 2:21,24). Christ bore the punishment for our sins, achieving the reconciliation of all things through the blood of His cross.

As we approach this Easter, let us keep at the front of our minds what exactly it is that we are celebrating. Not bunnies, eggs and candy. Rather, that God in His infinite mercy was pleased to reconcile us to Himself completely through the blood of the cross of Christ, and Christ achieved that victory over death itself when He rose again on that first Easter morning.

— Peter Haugen  
Trinity Free Lutheran  
Grand Forks, N.D.

humans in our natural state are "alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds" (Colossians 1:21), even though "there is none righteous, ... none who does good" (Romans 3:10-12), nevertheless God in His unfathomable grace and love was pleased to reconcile, that is, to restore to Himself, every member of the human race who has lived, is living, or will live.

Note the completeness, the totality, of the phrase "all things ... whether things on earth or things in heaven." It has been done fully by Him. Not only has it been done — it pleased Him to do it, and to do it completely. What a comfort to us when we are plagued with doubts regarding this awesome work of Christ in relation to ourselves! Our God-given faith does, indeed, must reconcile us individually with God because He has worked an objective, universal reconciliation through the satisfaction made by Christ. As Christ rendered satisfaction for our sins on the cross, God laid aside His holy anger and did not count our



Know  
Jesus  
Know  
peace



**A**s we look around our regions, our country and the world, we are witnessing fear, frustration, financial panic and the threat of war. “Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world” (Luke 21:26). Right now, stress and anxiety are mounting. Masses around the world fear some kind of nuclear or biological terrorism. Could terrorism happen again in America?

“After 9/11 and the fall of the twin towers, people flocked to churches. That only lasted about six months, before the religious fervor passed away. People said the churches were dead, boring and the preacher had nothing to say to help them. Now, church attendance is less than it was prior to 9/11,” said David Wilkerson (Sept. 8, 2002). Evidently, the people didn’t hear about Jesus and the Kingdom of God that cannot be shaken.

“Once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens. The words once more indicates the removing of what can be shaken, that is, created things, so that what cannot be shaken will remain” (Hebrews 12:26-28). Today many of these earthly things are being shaken so that we might put our faith and trust in the living God, who is unshakable.

I am so thankful for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. What a joy it is to know that Jesus overcame sin, death and the power of Satan by His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Because of Jesus I have confidence and purpose for living along with hope and assurance of heaven. “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (I Corinthians 15:17-20).

The resurrection gives the believer confidence for the future. “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him” (I Thessalonians 4:13-14). We also have the confident words of Jesus to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whosoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

The Christian can also have the peace of God in the midst of a troubled and unstable world. When Jesus told His disciples that He was going to die and go back to the Father, sorrow filled their hearts. But He also told them He would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to be with them. Jesus said, “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I

have overcome the world” (John 16:33). He also said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

Those who don’t know Jesus as their Lord and Savior cannot experience this peace. “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. ‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked’” (Isaiah 57:20-21).

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we can have confidence and purpose for living as well as the hope and assurance of heaven. We can also be overcomers through Jesus: “They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them” (Revelation 12:10-12).

The believer can experience peace in the midst of turmoil and threats of terrorism. “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19). Jesus is our anchor and hope, something to hold onto in troubled times. I am reminded of Job when he asked, “If a man dies, will he live again?” (Job 14:14). Later he answered that question, “And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth” (Job 19:25). In the midst of suffering, Job had complete hope and confidence in the Redeemer and the One who could resurrect him, Jesus Christ.

Regardless of the times and circumstances we are living in, God has promised us, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” (Hebrews 13:5-6). God’s Word also states, “What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all — how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32).

— Pastor Dale Finstrom  
Maranatha Free Lutheran  
Glyndon, Minn.





Christ  
crucified

# Lent Simplified

It's time for Christians to simplify deep down to necessary things. One thing: Jesus' death on the cross.

asked of the Lord, that I shall seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To

**L**ent is a time for the spring-cleaning of the heart, a time to unclutter the heart littered with the discarded junk mail of earthly entanglements and the months-old newspapers of earthly concern. It is a time for Christians to simplify deep down to necessary things. One thing actually, and that is the Lord Jesus — through whom and for whom all things were made — hanging dead on the cross.

This is one thing for our hearts to focus on. It makes one thing for which to live. Jesus Christ died on the cross so that we could know Him.

Jesus died on the cross, ripping through the barrier to a personal relationship with Him, the barrier of our sin. In His own words, He died so that “whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). He clarifies: “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

The one thing of the cross simplifies our priorities down to one thing: knowing God. It is the one thing of Mary the disciple, the one thing of David the king, the one thing of Jeremiah the prophet, and the one thing of Paul the apostle.

Mary sat at Jesus' feet, concerned with one thing — getting to know Him, while Martha, her sister, was distracted by all her preparations. The Lord spoke: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her” (Luke 10:39-42).

David prayed to dwell where He could get to do one thing — to know God. And His prayer is God's prayer for us: “One thing I have

beheld the delightfulness of the Lord And to meditate in His temple” (Psalm 27:4).

Jeremiah spoke the Lord's words when he told the Israelites they could only brag about one thing: “Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not a mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this; that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Paul confessed to the Philippian Christians that he valued just one thing: “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish ... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:8, 10).

Through the disciple, the king, the prophet and the apostle, God teaches us that the one thing of the cross means one thing for which to live. For all of us whose hearts are cluttered with thoughts of better food, better shelter, and better clothing; for all of us whose hearts are littered with news from Wall Street and Pennsylvania Avenue; for all of us who think the supreme blessings of earth and heaven are for the eyes, the stomach, or the ego, God tells us to simplify deep down to this: Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins so that we could know Him.

Significantly, this knowing is not merely a task to be rewarded but is its own reward. To be sure, the supreme blessing of heaven is not the crystal sea, the choice food, or the golden crowns. It is to know God face to face. And quite like it is the supreme blessing of life on earth: to know God through His Word. As one writer was quoted by C.S. Lewis, “He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God alone” (“The Weight of Glory”).

May this Lenten season be a time when the junk mail ads and old newspapers of earthly concern are discarded determinedly from the center of our hearts; a time when in their place the Word of our crucified and risen Savior finds an uncluttered home.

— Brent Olson  
Grace Free Lutheran  
Maple Grove, Minn.



*This topic has been treated expertly and fully by J.I. Packer in “Knowing God,” C.S. Lewis in “The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses,” A.W. Tozer in “The Pursuit of God,” and Harold L. Seubel in “Dying to Live.”*

# Christ's death & God's nature



**A**s a young child in my home congregation, faithful and godly Sunday school teachers taught me the Word of God that would nurture the faith created in my heart at baptism. I vividly recall the emphasis on the nature of our God as they defined Him: omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent. The greatness and majesty of God was set before me. I also remember the pastor's clear preaching and teaching of the cross and the sacrifice of Jesus. Oh, how he proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ, yes, His forgiveness. The doctrine of God and the doctrine of Christ — is there a connection between these two teachings? Maybe, as a child I did not see it, but it has to be there. The teaching of salvation must be connected with the teaching of the nature of God.

My view of God was learned solely at the cross of His dear Son. His greatness, holiness, justness, and righteousness are revealed at Calvary. I could not think of God without Christ. What God is like was forever etched upon my mind, heart and soul as the Crucified One was also unveiled to me from God's Word. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were the other means by which God's grace was instilled in me.

Now, God's nature, as well as His will and working, were above my understanding and wisdom as a child. Yet, there was no speculation about God, His majesty and glory, apart from Christ. What was in the Word was taught — nothing more, nothing less.

We have lost the sense of the majesty of our God in the Church today. With this loss He is reduced to something little above man at best. We do not stand in awe of Him nor are we even conscious of His presence. We certainly cannot relate to Isaiah's lofty view of His holiness, Jeremiah's understanding of His righteousness, Moses' experience of His brightness nor of John's encounter with His voice from Heaven at Jesus' baptism.

It is not strange that the Cross of Jesus Christ is also forgotten in our preaching and teaching today. We hear much about God — or the Supreme Being, or the Greater Power — but almost nothing about Jesus. Certainly, if the very nature of God is minimized, then the work of Christ is not needed. For then man could control his own destiny.

There is indeed a connection between Christ and the Cross and how we view God and His nature. We see this in Paul's letter to the Colossae Christians: "For in Christ all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). But definitively connected to this truth is the revelation that this very God suffered, died, and rose again so that sinful man is forgiven (Colossians 2:10-15). The work of Christ guarantees for us our salvation. His love overwhelms His wrath. His mercy covers our sin. His grace grants us new life. His holiness and justice find its full expression at the cross.

The nature of God and Christ crucified are inseparable. We can only know what God is like through His Son. Martin Luther states it this way: "He who would know God aright must know Him in Christ, that is, in that Word and promise which Scripture and the prophets have spoken and testified concerning Him. This is precisely the teaching and preaching of the Gospel: that this Christ is the Son of God, sent by the Father to become the sacrifice and payment for the world's sin through His own blood and in this way to remove God's wrath and reconcile us, so that, redeemed from sin and death, we might obtain eternal righteousness and life through Him ... There is no other way or means to attain God's grace and eternal life than through the faith which in this way apprehends Christ ... And he who knows Christ in this way knows the Father too."

— Pastor Terry Olson  
Our Saviour's Lutheran  
Thief River Falls, Minn.

# Chaplaincy Who cares?

When it comes to those who serve and protect you, are you willing to show them God's love?

**“W**ho cares for those who serve and protect us?” It’s a question I never really considered before. Like many pastors, my plate was full with caring for my own congregation, and I didn’t feel the need to go out looking for extra tasks to do. But it began when I became friends with a couple of police officers. They were ordinary guys who mowed their lawns, played catch with their kids, and looked like everyone else, but who lived in a world most of us don’t understand.

They are reminded of the possibility of being shot, or having to use deadly force, every time they get ready for work, put on their bulletproof vest and strap on their gun. But more than that, they have to deal with all the bad things people do to one another every day, witnessing horrific images, and coming alongside those who are victims, survivors, or the next of kin. Then they go home, take off their uniform and mow the lawn or play catch with their kids — like everyone else. It wasn’t until I became a friend that I became aware of some of the real costs and sacrifices these men and their families paid, serving and protecting my family and me. It was then that I decided that I wanted to be one who cares for them, that I would be willing if God opened the door. It didn’t take long.

Within the first month after arriving in Lisbon, Ill., I met a Methodist pastor who was a police chaplain for the county. Within another month he informed me he was being reassigned and asked if I would be interested in filling his place as a chaplain. God works fast.

In my first year, I went through a lot of training. I was surprised to find that one out of every three police marriages end in divorce. That alcohol and drug abuse are a common means of dulling the pain of all they see and experience. That twice as many police officers die each year from suicide than are killed in the line of duty. It was a sobering reality check of the hard path that each officer and his or her family find themselves on. But what I found as I began riding along with the officers were men and women who were not only impressive in their professionalism, intelligence, and



commitment to helping others, but real people who liked to talk about their kids, follow the Cubs and work in their yards.

I also found that many police officers and their families find themselves isolated in their communities due to the constantly changing life of shift work. Things like regularly participating in church, going to ball games, or even having friends outside of work are often too much effort and frustration to have any consistency in, and many give up trying. Fortunately, many of the officers who I have met have a relationship with Jesus. But there are also many officers out there who don’t know Christ.

“Who cares for those who serve and protect you?” I’d like to challenge you to prayerfully consider this question, recognizing that there is a great need and opportunity in your own community. Please consider how you might be used of God to show His love to those who watch over you.

— *Pastor Randy Nelson  
Bethlehem Lutheran  
Lisbon, Ill.*

# At the **FOOT** of the **CROSS**

By Karen Hart, M.Ed., L.P.

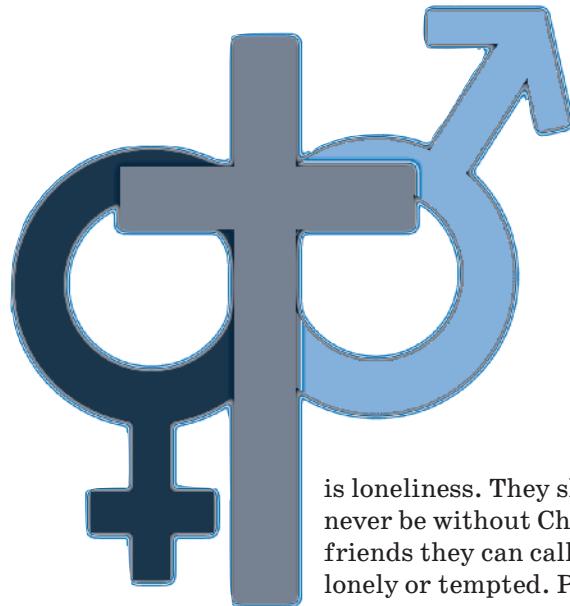
**G**od made everyone heterosexual. Homosexuality is a defense mechanism against deep hurts. The battle against same sex attractions will be won or lost in the mind, and the homosexual's thought life must be brought under the Lordship of Jesus. It goes without saying — no Christian in bondage to ungodly thoughts will be able to help another to get free of them.

There are a number of attitudes that feed same sex attractions. Homosexuals often spend a lot of time thinking about their resentments, thinking

envious thoughts about others, and thinking self-piteous thoughts about themselves. They often believe themselves to be inferior to others, but as a defense mechanism, try to convince themselves they are superior. Christians with same sex attractions need to get into the Word, memorize meaningful Scriptures, and replace their ungodly thoughts with God's thoughts.

Homosexuals in recovery have a tremendous need to forgive the people who hurt them, and any good recovery program will emphasize that. Often they felt rejected by their parents (this may be real or perceived). Often other children hurt them. There is a need to forgive abusers and former partners. The best person to walk them through the long process of forgiveness is someone who has had to take their own hurts and dump them at the foot of the cross. No one struggling with bitterness can help another.

The recovering homosexual may go through a long spell of emotional dryness. If they have slammed the door on homosexuality, their major source of comfort and gratification is gone, and their new identity has not yet had time to solidify. The number one reason for going back to the gay lifestyle



is loneliness. They should never be without Christian friends they can call when lonely or tempted. Part of the genius of the Alcoholics

**A n o n y m o u s** program is the pairing of recovering alcoholics with sponsors who are more experienced members of the program. Recovery from homosexuality requires similar support. After receiving salvation, the biggest need a homosexual has is to bond with safe people of the same sex. Christian men need to walk alongside the homosexual struggler and help him find his place in the company of men. Christian women need to do the same with lesbian strugglers. Love them, pray with them, hold them accountable, and learn about their issues. Let them give something back so they can feel better about themselves. These people are precious in God's sight; let them be precious in yours.

Don't be afraid to invite these people into your home. Some of them have never seen a family where the husband and wife love and honor each other and children are a high priority. It is unlikely that they will harm your children. And don't be afraid to give your overcoming friend a hug; if you don't sexualize it, he or she won't.

Women with same sex attractions are especially alert to gender roles in traditional families. Be sensitive to this. The feminist ideology is a defense mechanism against a world they perceive as unsafe for women. Avoid making disparaging remarks about their views. Instead, Christian women can show how the husband's godly leadership blesses the family. Christian men can demonstrate how Jesus has called them to lead by serving, and placing their family's needs above their own.

Women overcoming lesbianism may be uncomfortable with viewing God in masculine terms. Be gentle about the issue but do not compromise the Scriptures. Show how God protects and honors women and treats them as His precious daughters. If your background in the Scriptures is thorough and solid, it should not be difficult to find biblical examples of this.

Do not push relationships with the opposite sex. If

the date goes badly, the gay lifestyle will look that much better. The over comer must first develop a secure bond with the same sex, get a strong sense of his own masculinity or her own femininity, and only then deal with his or her lack of trust of the opposite sex. Some people are called by God to be single and celibate, and the Church should never treat them as second rate. The apostle Paul certainly did not think so.

Love the sinner *more* than you hate their sin. Don't be afraid to defend them when they are being treated unfairly. These people have a high level of fear and often view the world as hostile and wishing them harm. If your attitude toward homosexuals is unloving, ask the Lord's forgiveness. Keep your focus on the cross, where the same ransom was paid for all. When Jesus ate His dinner with prostitutes and the traitors who collected taxes for the Romans, He never acted like He had to wear His disapproval on His shirtsleeve. So why should we?

And last, be Spirit-led. You are not the first Christian to help a homosexual overcome, and you won't be the last. The Apostle Paul began a well-worn trail in ancient Corinth that leads to post-modern America.



## RESOURCES

### **Exodus North America**

An umbrella organization of Christian ex-gay ministries.

**Phone:** 407-599-6872

**Web site:** [www.exodusnorthamerica.org](http://www.exodusnorthamerica.org)

### **National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality**

A professional organization open to people of all faiths, for the purpose of pursuing research about homosexuality and making therapy available to homosexuals.

**Phone:** 818-789-4440

**Web site:** [www.narth.com](http://www.narth.com)

### **Keys Ministries to Homosexuals**

A Biblically based program designed to deal with the roots of the homosexual condition. It can be done by correspondence, making it ideal for people in remote locations. Keys serves overcomers on six continents.

**Phone:** 507-352-4110

**Web site:** [www.keysministry.com](http://www.keysministry.com)

### **[www.christianbl.org](http://www.christianbl.org)**

An online forum for Christian males who are sexually attracted to minors. Provides accountability to help its members live by Biblical standards. Visitors are welcome who are willing to respect the forum's policies. Pornographic photographs, inappropriate contacts between posters, anti-Christian comments, and hostile comments are not acceptable.

# At risk

Youth Ministries offers materials to minister to college-age students

**H**er eyes were full of pain. "It only took the university six weeks to completely destroy my son's faith," she said. This mother had raised her son in a loving home and had taken him to church and a spiritually thriving youth group.

When he arrived at the university, everything fell apart. The Christian group on campus didn't meet when he was free. His dorm situation was a nightmare: men made sexual passes at him; he had to share showers with girls; drugs and drunkenness were ever-present; pornographic films played endlessly; partying and clouds of marijuana made sleep or study impossible. Christian students in the dorms were openly mocked. The only light at the end of his tunnel was a train.

An experience like this happens to one out of two Christian students on a college campus, according to Summit Ministries.

In high school there are four pillars in a student's life: Church, family, Christian friends, and the Word of God. When a student graduates, these pillars are often left behind.

The need is critical! We must work together to solve this problem. The AFLC Youth Ministries office is designed to serve the local church. We must come alongside congregations to help meet this need. There are several things we can do:

- **PRAY:** We must bring these students to the Lord daily in prayer.
- We must know where they are. Please send us the addresses of the students from your church.
- We must build relationships. We need to connect students to Christians who can be their support away from home.
- We must connect them to the church.
- We must prepare them for the humanistic worldview they will encounter.

Youth Ministries has a presentation to bring to churches and a packet that will give specific action steps that churches can implement. We would love to bring this presentation to your congregation. Call us at (763) 545-5631.

# WMF

# Worship Him!

## In Spirit & in Truth

John  
4:24

**Make plans now to attend the National WMF Convention**

**June 11 at the Swiftel Center in Brookings, S.D.**

**Registration: 7:30-10 a.m.**

**Business meeting: 8-9:45 a.m.**

**Program begins at 10 a.m.**

**T**he convention will be dedicated to our executive secretaries of the past, present, and future: Judith Wold, Karen Knudsvig, Cheryl Aakre, and our newly called executive secretary, Sharon Borg.

We will be celebrating our yesterdays, embracing our tomorrows!

Bring your children to First Lutheran Church, Main Avenue and 8th Street, for vacation Bible school. A baby nursery will be available at the Swiftel Center.

The highlight of our 8 a.m. business meeting will be an explanation and discussion of the proposed amendments to our constitution.

An inspirational program will begin at 10 a.m. We will be privileged to have a mission update and Bible study from missionary to Brazil, Becky Abel, and a report from former missionary to Portugal, Sarah Nelson. Barbara Elmquist, WMF national II vice presi-

dent, will lead the praise and worship times.

Over the luncheon hour Faith Nelson, Women's Outreach Coordinator, will encourage us to share ways in which the Lord has brought blessings into our lives. Then we'll break for afternoon workshops that will include "How to Do a Mission Festival" by Carol Knapp and "Telling Yourself the Truth" by Kristie Nelson. You will need to choose which workshop you plan to attend and indicate that on the registration form. Both workshops will be audio taped and available for purchase.

The speaker for the evening banquet will be AFLC President Pastor Robert Lee. Special speaker at our Thursday evening Mission Festival Service will be Pastor Paul Abel, missionary to Brazil.

— Cheryl Skordahl  
WMF President

## WMF National Convention

**June 11, 2003  
Swiftel Center, 824 32nd Ave.  
Brookings, S.D.**

### Fees

Registration \$7:\_\_\_\_\_

Luncheon \$5:\_\_\_\_\_

Banquet \$7.50:\_\_\_\_\_

Total:\_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable  
to: Linda Buck (WMF)

Mail to:  
Linda Buck  
306 Park Ave., Box 38  
Sinai, SD 57061-0038

Name:\_\_\_\_\_

Address:\_\_\_\_\_

City/state/zip:\_\_\_\_\_

Phone:\_\_\_\_\_

### Check which workshop you will attend

Workshop I: How to do a Mission Festival

Led by Carol Knapp \_\_\_\_\_

Workshop II: Telling Yourself the Truth

Led by Kristie Nelson \_\_\_\_\_

# Letter

I am writing regarding the article, "Better days are ahead," by Pastor Tom Olson in the Nov. 26, 2002, issue of "The Lutheran Ambassador."

Pastor Olson begins the article with the statement, "I am a pre-millennialist." He then proceeds to interpret various portions of the Old Testament and New Testament as supporting his view.

I urge you to point out to your readers that a pre-millennialist view is contrary to Lutheran theology and the Augsburg Confession.

Neither Jesus nor Paul alluded to the Millennium.

Luther dismissed it by saying, "This false notion is lodged not only in the apostles (Acts 1:6), but also in the chiliasts, Valentinians, and Tertullians, who have played the fool with the idea that before Judgment Day the Christians alone will possess the earth and that there will be no ungodly. And what moved them to harbor this idea is this, that the ungodly are so fortunate in the world; possess kingdoms and worldly authority, wisdom, and power, while the Christians are of no account in comparison with them. So they thought: Surely, all the ungodly will be rooted out so that the pious may live in

peace" ("What Luther Says" No. 836).

I believe that John Mueller's text "Christian Dogmatics" is still used in our seminary. It states: "Millennialism (millenarianism) has no Scriptural foundation whatever. The passages which are usually quoted in its favor (Isaiah 2: 2-4; 11:6-9; Zechariah 9:9-10; Joel 3:2 ff; Micah 4:1-4; Revelation 20:1-10) do not predict a millennial reign at all, but describe the spiritual glory of the Church of the New Testament, which is brought about through the coming of the Messiah and the preaching of the gospel throughout the whole world, Luke 2:13-14; 1:76-79; 1:46-55" (p.622).

On the following page Mueller points out that belief in the Millennium "is Satan's most subtle way of inducing believers to regard the crucified Christ as a stumbling-block and foolishness, I Corinthians 1:23; for their chiliastic dream is really the effect of their inward dissatisfaction with the lowliness of Christ's Church on earth."

Mueller summarizes: "The Lutheran Church, on the basis of Holy Scripture, rejects the doctrine of the Millennium as a figment of the human mind. The Augsburg Confession (Art. XVII) voices its dis-

agreement with millennialism ..." (p.621).

The last sentence of Article XVII of the Augsburg Confession states: "Rejected, too, are certain Jewish opinions which are even now making an appearance and which teach that, before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless" ("Ambassador Hymnal," 82).

The AFLC requires all of its pastors and congregations to subscribe to the Augsburg Confession. I am concerned that your publication of Pastor Olson's comments may lead readers to conclude that a belief in pre-millennialism is a legitimate and acceptable Lutheran doctrine endorsed by the AFLC.

— **Pastor Ivars J. Krafts**  
Faith Free Lutheran  
Minneapolis, Minn.

*Editor's note: The AFLC, throughout its history, has not endorsed the pre-millennial or the amillennial position of interpreting Scripture and, in particular, understanding the doctrine of the end times. We have held that it is an open question. We have a number of people within our AFLC who are "premill" and a number who are "amill." We have agreed to disagree on the issue and have chosen to respect that people can hold either position and still be evangelical, Christian and Lutheran.*



New members were accepted Jan. 6 at Christian Free Lutheran, Wheatland, Iowa. Pictured are Mike, Victoria, Emma and Michael FritzKapps; Cheryl Dexter, Kari Jones, Joanne and Virtus Reiling and granddaughter Kalynn; Christine Stankee; Kit, Kayla and Kerry Phelps; Pastor Keith Quanbeck. Not pictured are Seth, Dakota and Paul Stankee and Nick Dexter.

## Evangelism Commission hosts special day for pastors, families

With the help of a grant from Thrivent, the AFLC Evangelism Commission is offering a special afternoon and evening for pastors and their families on the Tuesday prior to the Annual Conference. The event will take place on June 10 at the Brookings Area Multiplex, Brookings, S.D.

Entitled "Rekindling the Fire," the afternoon will feature a challenge from Dr. Paul Cedar, chairman of Mission America Coalition. The evening banquet will also feature Cedar as the special speaker.

Child care will be provided, as well as activities for youths of all ages. Registration is due by May 10. For more information, contact Pastor Jim Rasmussen at AFLC headquarters, (763) 545-5631.

# AFLTS Graduates

## Matt Steendahl, Royal City, Wash.

**B**eing raised in a Christian home is one of the blessings in my life that I am most thankful for. I cannot remember a time in my life when I did not know Jesus Christ as the Savior of my sins. My parents, John and Clara Steendahl, taught me the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments at an early age. Even though I was raised in a Chris-

tian home, and was very active in the church youth group in high school, my decision to go to college was based upon a strong desire to learn more about God. This desire led me to the Lutheran Bible Institute of Seattle (now Trinity Lutheran College), where I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in biblical studies. Part way through college I married my high school sweetheart, Christine,

One more graduating seminarian will be featured in next month's issue.

who attended LBI with me. Shortly after getting married, God made it very obvious to us that my formal education would continue past LBI. I cannot explain it other than to say it was a strong sense of call to go to seminary.

Being raised in the ELCA and not knowing a lot about the other branches of Lutheranism out there, it was off to Luther Seminary we went. After one year of study at Luther, one year of mentoring under Pastor Jim Ritter, one year of my

## Wade Mobley, Lake Preston, S.D.

**I** grew up in Lake Preston, S.D., in a home that was "half" Christian. My mother, Jan, was (and is) a wonderful Christian lady. But my father, Vince, while being a very moral man, did not know Christ. Mom taught us that the Bible was true and that we needed to believe in Jesus Christ to go to heaven. Through the years I was a good kid, staying out of trouble and going to church with my family. But family problems caused me to doubt that God cared or even existed. I was a church-going atheist, not believing much of anything concerning Christ.

When my parents divorced in 1989, Mom decided that we needed a new church home. Our former church had just announced itself to be a staunchly pro-choice church, and we accepted some friends' invitation to

attend Calvary Free Lutheran Church in the basement of a grocery store in neighboring Arlington, S.D. It was there that I heard what Mom had taught us — Jesus Christ and Him crucified — preached from a pulpit.

"They actually believe this stuff!" I thought.

The pastor, Brian Pearson, and the congregation took me under their wings, and over the course of three years in God's Word, Jesus broke through my hardened heart and I came to know Christ at the 1991 FLY Convention.

While attending four years of college at South Dakota State University in Brookings, S.D., I coached high school basketball and worked with the youth group at Calvary. One summer I worked about a dozen basketball camps across the Midwest. I took a one-week break in my schedule to counsel at the 1995 FLY Convention. Some

## Zakayo Mwinyikely, Mbulu, Tanzania

**Z**akayo Malekwa Mwinyikely, a laughing, joyful believer with the physique of an NFL linebacker and the heart of an evangelist, was born in Tanzania, Africa, in 1951. His father died three days later. After five difficult years, Zak's Muslim mother, depressed and suicidal, left her child in the care of a grandmother, a godly Christian woman.

There, Zak was baptized and sent to local mission schools.

"I was a good Lutheran, but not a

Christian," says Zak.

He was drafted into the National Service, where he was saved.

"I was saved from the mentality of being a good Lutheran, but without hope," says Zak. "In 1969 I was awakened by the evangelistic ministry in Mbulu. I was then saved."

About the same time, Zak had challenged the Army's top athlete to a javelin-throwing contest. Without proper training tools, Zak cut down trees and shaped them into sticks to throw. He used wood as weights for

lifting. Meanwhile, the military had given him an ultimatum: either the Army or preaching.

At the championship track meet between the Army and the National Service in 1975, Zak threw his first real javelin, shattering the national record by nine feet. More importantly, Zak clinched his own personal security. A good athlete, it seems, was a national treasure.

Soon after, Zak was chosen for leadership training and was given time to train for the Olympics. He then went to Moscow to compete in the 1980 Olympic Games and was escorted out by the KGB for preach-

wife working at Emmaus Lutheran in Bloomington, Minn., as the Children's Ministries Director, let's just say that one year was instrumental in us coming to the AFLC Seminary. The one driving force that brought us to the AFLC was the focus on the Word of God as being inerrant and infallible. This was a belief that I never really sorted out until college, but then in seminary, refused to let go of. It was too hard for me to take seminary classes at Luther when the focus of the class was not centered on the fundamental principle that the Bible is true. Looking back, it is clear that the Lord works in mysterious ways. I cannot imagine moving my family halfway across the country away from

everyone we knew to go to a school I had never heard of. God used Luther Seminary to get us to Minnesota, to get my wife a job at an AFLC church, and finally to get me to realize I needed to be at AFLTS.

We are enjoying living near extended family again here in Washington. Our two boys, Ryan (2) and Christian (8 months) are the joy of our lives. Working with the youth at Elim Lutheran here in Lake Stevens has been the highlight of my internship and it pushes me to an understanding that my future has youth ministry as a major part of it. These are exciting times as I am finishing up my internship and wait for what God has for us next.



acquaintances challenged me to attend Bible school, and after another week of basketball camp I said, "Okay, Lord, if that's what you want I'll go to AFLBS for one quarter." I didn't leave the campus until last spring.

AFLBS was a great experience for me. It was there that I learned the basics of Scripture and became a Lutheran by conviction. I also perceived Jesus' call to full-time ministry during my first year. Though I love coaching kids, it occurred to me that preaching Christ and Him crucified was ultimately more important than teaching kids a good jump shot.

After my year of internship in southern California (Lutheran Church of the Cross in Laguna Woods and Aliso Viejo), I am more convinced than ever of the quality of my education at AFLTS. I learned from godly men — themselves pastors — how to minister to souls God's way: Preach the Word, love the people, and teach them to share Jesus with others. He has promised us that His Word will not return to Him empty (Isaiah 55:11) and that His Word is "the power of God for salvation to all who believe" (Romans 1:16). Michele and I look forward to serving Jesus in this way wherever He leads.

**Note:** Wade graduated from Northwestern College, St. Paul, Minn., in 1999 with a B.A. in history. He married Michele Deubner, Brockton, Mont.

ing on street corners. He won the bronze medal in the Commonwealth Games in Australia in 1982. He competed in the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles and the 1988 Games in Seoul, South Korea.

His athletic ability opened up many doors of opportunity. Most importantly, he was able to study. While in the United States, Zak gave up his government scholarship so that he could study what he wanted: Theology. He earned his own scholarships with his skill as a thrower. Among the schools he attended were Wayland Baptist University in Texas and Texas Lutheran College. He also attended

Wartburg Seminary in Iowa. In each school, he battled liberal teaching.

"It was difficult, for my reasoning was challenged, but my faith remained."

Zak went home in 1990 to work on his thesis and preach. At the urging of FLS alum Zakarea Axwesso and missionary Dr. Norvald Yri, he enrolled at FLS to complete his studies. His quest for a seminary that teaches Jesus as the only way to salvation ended at FLS.

"It is the right place," says Zak.

Zak finished his studies in December and returned to his wife, Restiel, and two daughters, Elizabeth and Rebeka. He serves four congregations.



# FLY Speaking the truth

## Bruce Marchiano, Pam Stenzel to speak at 2003 convention

**S**pinning in circles, each vote being still too close to call, discussion after discussion, prayer after prayer, the FLY Committee was nearing despair. Who was going to be the Monday night service speaker? Who did we want to set the tone for the whole week? Who would grab kids' attention after a long bus ride and jittery anticipation for the week ahead? After yet another vote with a really close split, the name Bruce Marchiano came to the table. Bruce who? A few minutes later, the FLY Committee watched portions of the "Matthew" video in which Bruce Marchiano played Jesus. An extremely talented actor, Marchiano brought the words of Jesus according to the gospel of Matthew to life. Then the crucifixion. This scene was the epitome of what we wanted to communicate for this week in Estes Park. "*Tetelestai — It Is Finished*" is the theme for the 2003 FLY Convention.

Once the video was turned off, the ideas started flying. "What if we ... and then he would ... well do you know if he ... oh, I heard him once ... this is perfect!" We felt like God had finally made it clear. Now all we had to do was ask Bruce Marchiano.

Since his portrayal of Jesus in 1993, actor/speaker/author Bruce Marchiano has been immersed in ministry. It started when Bruce was asked to speak at a church. A bit surprised, Bruce agreed. "I just talked

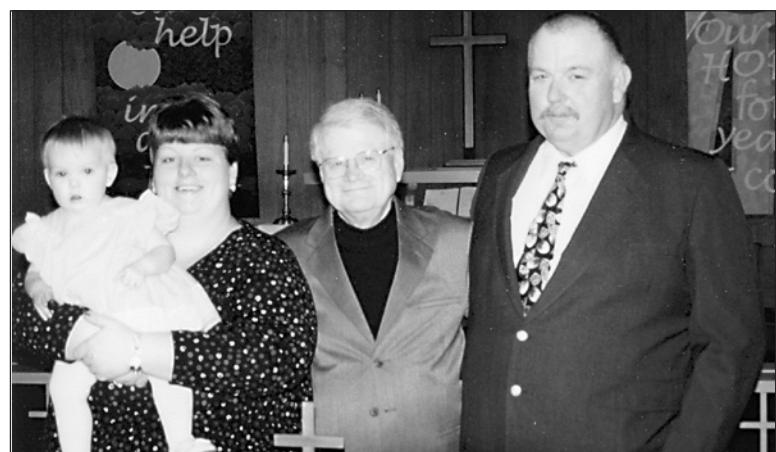
about Jesus — His love, His reality, His heart — as we discovered Him in the making of the movie, and the Lord did a mighty thing in a lot of lives. From then on the invitations just continued to roll in and here I am, years later, and the invitations continue to mount. It's turned into a full-blown ministry — sharing the reality of Jesus Christ." (Taken from [www.brucemarchiano.com](http://www.brucemarchiano.com)). Worldwide, in almost any facility imaginable, Bruce has shared his experiences with thousands of people. Bruce shares about extremely powerful times during the making of the movie where God revealed His character and love. He recalls the crucifixion as being an especially moving scene to shoot. Marchiano also gives an inside look into his life-changing experience of portraying Jesus in his book, "In the Footsteps of Jesus."

The FLY Committee's decision to have Pam Stenzel speak at the convention was nowhere near as difficult. Pam was a speaker at the 1997 and 1999 FLY Conventions, and her absence from the 2001 convention left many students asking, "Where's the sex lady?" That's right. Pam tackles the issues of sex and the importance of character candidly and truthfully. She has traveled across the world, sharing the truth of God's Word with young people concerning abstinence before marriage and the physical and emotional consequences of being disobedient in this area. She encourages self-control and discipline. Her goal is to change the attitude that young people have towards sex, knowing that then they will make better decisions.

— *Andrea Monseth*  
*FLY Committee*



Members of Ebenezer Lutheran, Northwood, N.D., honored member Frieda King recently when she celebrated 100 years. Pictured are Pastor Greg Schram, daughter Susan Lloyd, Frieda King, Pete Antonson, and Wes Kunz. The church gave \$100 to Vision 2004 in her honor.



On Feb. 2, three generations in one family were baptized at St. James Lutheran, Garden City, Kan. Pictured are Shena and Anna-Belle Farris, Pastor Richard Frederick and David Farris. Carla Farris, not pictured, was also baptized. St. James recently accepted Theresa Stafford, Doug Heth and Richard, Jeanette and Andrew Frederick as members.

# Missions India

## A light in a dark place

**I**ndia could be called a dark place spiritually. It is a place where only 2 percent of the people are Christian; the rest are predominantly Hindu. Yet there is a light with the good news of salvation in Christ glowing there. It is the AFLC work going on in India.

The light affects people like Sudheakar. Sudheakar is an orphan who lives onsite at St. Paul's school. He hears the word of God daily in the classroom and from those who care for him. The light of Jesus shines in his heart in this spiritually dark nation. Unfortunately, the light is not as bright as it could be, because we can't afford to bring more orphans in out of the darkness. For the price of \$30 a month, you could provide for one of these children.



The light affects people like Anand, a young man living in a Hindu village. Anand is the only Christian in his village. He has set aside a plot of land there and hopes to build a church on it one day.

That dream is not only for the young in India. An old man had the same dream. The church in his town is only half finished. The work was stopped two years earlier for lack of funds. The Hindus in his town walk by and ridicule the Christians because they can't finish their church. His dream is to have a church in his village before the Lord calls him home.

If we lived in a town without a church we'd have the same dreams as these men. I challenge you, your church, or your district to help these people. It would cost \$4,000 to finish a church. There are several churches that need just the roof. The cost to build a church for some of these villages without one only costs \$8,000.

Not only do the churches provide light in a dark world, but they also provide protection from the storms. For many Indian people, their church is the only safe building when the typhoons come. Their mud and thatch huts can't stand up to the wind and rain. Would you help them in their distress?

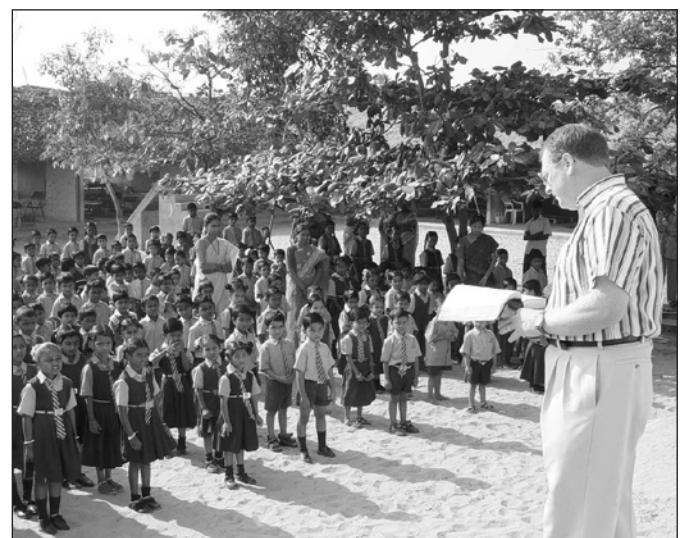
— **Pastor Del Palmer**  
**World Missions Director**



Pastor Luther Sastry and his family hosted Pastor Robert Lee and Pastor Del Palmer during a visit in late January.



Pastors and Bible women gathered to welcome the visitors from America.



AFLC World Missions Director Pastor Del Palmer speaks to an assembled group of children at St. Paul's school.

# Missions Brazil

By Craig Johnson  
Editor

**A**lot of growth can happen in 16 years. Newborns can grow up and get a driver's license. And congregations and church bodies, by the grace of God, can enjoy significant growth.

I visited Brazil for six months in 1987 and then returned in January, traveling with Loiell Dyrud. We spoke at the 37th Annual Conference of AFLC-Brazil, held at Foz do Iguaçu, and at congregations in Campo Mourão and Curitiba. The sessions focused on the nature of Georg Sverdrup's vision for a Lutheran Free Church movement and its meaning and application for our day.

Much change has happened since 1987, but even more dramatic is the change since the first annual conference in Brazil in 1966. Missionary John Abel gathered eight people from four congregations together for that first conference. This year's conference had 225 people older than 12 years of age registered. The church body now consists of 15 congregations.

The opening service of the conference began when representatives of various congregations entered carrying banners they had made featuring the conference's and the AFLC's theme verse: II Corinthians 3:17, "... where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Worship services were held on Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday morning. Business sessions and elections took place on Saturday.

Changes have occurred throughout the nation of Brazil. In 1987, getting a phone line was an expensive proposition that often involved a lengthy wait. Now people have cell phones and they share their e-mail address with you. Access to the Bible school and seminary campus in Campo Mourão had been a dirt road that was dusty when dry and muddy and slippery when wet. Now it is easy-to-drive-on asphalt. I remember seeing empty shelves in the grocery store in Campo Mourão when I was there in 1987. Now we went into a large supermarket, full of choices, even offering samples. In Curitiba a part of the metro area that as recently as 10 years ago was undeveloped is now full of homes and industry and the site of a possible new church plant.

Changes have also occurred in the congregations and ministries of the AFLC-Brazil. New ministries have begun during the past 16 years such as the Miriam Infant Home in Campo Mourão and the ARCA Bible Camp in Curitiba. New congregations have begun



TOP: Pastor Oseias Camara leads a conference business session. ABOVE: Missionaries Jon and Tamba Abel and family, retired missionary John and Ruby Abel; Craig Johnson; missionaries Becky and Paul Abel; Carolyn and Connely Dyrud and Loiell Dyrud.

in areas such as Campo Grande and the metropolitan area around Curitiba. We visited new church buildings constructed in Campo Mourão and Curitiba.

I also saw changes in the lives of people I had known 16 years ago. Some who were students back then now have families and are leaders in their congregations and the church body. A number of these leaders were quite interested in learning of the heritage and meaning of free congregations. We spoke of how the congregation is like a choir where everyone has a part to sing. Other topics covered were the important role of the laypeople in the life of the congregation, and the calling of the pastors and leaders to be humble servants. The high level of interest in learning about the free congregation movement was encouraging and a reminder of the unique power of this vision of free and living congregations.

In thinking about the AFLC-Brazil, another change that has been going on and will need to be

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See BRAZIL, page 22



Attendees at the conclusion of the 37th AFLC-Brazil Annual Conference.



Pastor Nilson Gomes, newly elected president, speaks during a session.

## Free and living congregations growing in Brazil

**T**he 37th Annual Conference of the Brazilian Association of Free Lutheran Congregations was Jan. 24-26 in Iguaçu Falls in the state of Paraná. Iguaçu Falls is a very attractive tourist center known worldwide for the beautiful waterfalls and the largest hydro-electric dam in the world. The average temperature at this time of year is over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. This was the first time an annual conference had been held in this city. The local congregation should be congratulated for the good organization and accommodations.

As for the actual work of the conference, we have noticed the maturing of the laymen and pastors as to the purpose of the conference and the way in which subjects are handled. We sense that our members are gaining a better idea of how the work of the Free Lutheran church should be carried out. In past years there had been a certain amount of hierarchy and authoritarian decision-making, which permeates our society and other Brazilian churches. It was almost as if it was hard to understand how a church could operate without a synod to organize and decide things. We used to discuss ideas which we thought the leaders of the Association needed to implement in the local congregations — such as pastors' salaries, placement of pastors, church discipline, etc. All of these things we now realize are matters that each individual congregation needs to take care of. Perhaps the ideas of Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedahl have taken a little more time for our churches to understand and implement. However, we are now following the principles of a Free Lutheran church and insisting on the autonomy of the local congregation.

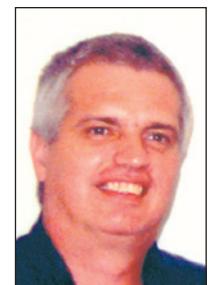
Our churches desire to learn more about our roots and gain a better understanding of how our Association

really operates according to the principles of God's Word. I have personally had the pleasure of growing in my understanding the history of the Free Lutheran Church. We appreciated having Loiell Dyrud and Pastor Craig Johnson with us at the conference, sharing Sverdrup's ideas about how a local congregation should be, the relationship between pastors and laity, and the emphasis on freedom.

Our Brazilian churches suffer from many deficiencies, perhaps the most visible being lack of monetary resources. The struggle for survival for most Brazilians continues to be hard. But we can clearly perceive the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God through the conference and in our individual congregations, bringing people to the Light who once walked in darkness. Certainly this work is just beginning as our country is huge and there are many fields waiting to be evangelized. For this reason I have emphasized in my own congregation the need to be mission-minded.

My participation in the 37th Annual Conference enforced my conviction that the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is being strengthened by God, in freedom under His care to complete His work of preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to every creature. May the Lord be with us and may the teachings of the conference remain in our hearts and minds for the glory of God.

— **Pastor Jaime Hartmann**  
**Mighty Fortress Lutheran**  
**Curitiba, Brazil**



**Ron and Cheryl Janssen**, members of Living Word Lutheran, Windom, Minn., were featured in a front-page article in the February issue of "Pro-Family News," published by the Minnesota Family Council and the Minnesota Family Institute. The story detailed the efforts of the Janssens to provide a more challenging high school civics curriculum for their son, Eric, in the Fulda, Minn., school district.

Internship assignments were made for three students of the Free Lutheran Seminary. **Karl Anderson** will serve at Trondhjem Free Lutheran, Volin, S.D.; **Brent Olson** will

serve Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., and **Jason Siemens** will serve at Helmar Lutheran, Newark, Ill. Internships will be served June 1 through May 21, 2004.

**Sharon Borg**, Maple Grove, Minn., has accepted a call to become the next executive secretary of the WMF. Sharon will be installed at our National Convention in June, spend several months in training beginning in the fall, and will be prepared to accept responsibilities of the position toward the end of the year. She replaces Cheryl Aakre.

**Rick Rasmussen**, Monticello,

## BRAZIL, from page 20

developed is the way we in North America view our sister church body to the south. It is natural for the church body that sends missionaries to plant the first congregations to view itself as the parent and the other church body as its child. It was impressed upon me, however, the importance of now viewing the members of the congregations there as our brothers and sisters.

I went to Brazil supposedly as a teacher, but at the end of the trip I felt as though I had done more learning than teaching. We can learn much from our fellow followers of Jesus in Brazil. Hopefully, they can also learn some things from us. Our relationship is not to be one-sided with one group seeing themselves always as the giver and the other as the receiver. It should more resemble what is talked of in Proverbs 27:17: "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Miles and different languages and cultures may separate us, but with God's help we can still sharpen one another.

While a sibling relationship may not contain the dependency of a parent-child, brothers and sisters still need one another. The need and opportunities for missionaries in Brazil still abound. Assistance can be provided in numerous ways. It all starts with prayer — praying with thanksgiving for the great things God has done, and praying for direction and the resources to enter through the open doors and vast opportunities God has placed before us to further throughout the world the vision of free and living congregations.

Minn., was appointed to serve on the Budget Analysis Committee until the Annual Conference, filling the vacancy created by the resignation of Loren Tungseth, Fergus Falls, Minn., who was elected to the Home Missions Committee.

**Pastor Mike Klenner**, Freeman, S.D., was appointed to serve on the Pension Board until the Annual Conference.

**Pastor Wayne Hanson**, King of Glory Lutheran Church, Eden Prairie, Minn., has been selected as one of eight chaplains to serve with the Eden Prairie Police Department.

## AFLC memorials — February

### Department given to

*... in memory of*

### AFLBS

*Thelma Sherman*

### AFLTS

*Orpha Peterson*

### FLAPS

*George Wikstrom Sr.*

*Dolores Wikstrom*

### Home Missions

*Grady Bjoralt*

*Ben Gerard*

*Cathy Piltingsrud*

### World Missions

*Anna Heidemann*

*Orlin Quanbeck*

### Vision 2004

*Stella Brown*

*Chris Bergerson*

*Jef Buhr*

*Norris Johnson*

*Harold Berg*

### AFLC Foundation

*Raymond Jacobson*

*Erling Emerson*

*Erwin Cudmore*

*... in honor of*

### Vision 2004

*Frieda King*

### Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

### AFLC Benevolences (2 month) — January 1 - February 28, 2003

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund . . . . .	\$305,568.00	\$26,286.52	\$50,843.35	17
Youth Ministries . . .	48,154.00	2,187.59	10,150.47	21
Parish Education . . .	90,907.00	3,527.22	7,931.41	9
Seminary . . . . .	150,070.00	8,881.88	18,700.87	12
Bible School . . . . .	263,356.00	15,362.91	28,062.73	11
Home Missions. . . . .	305,087.00	30,919.45	46,967.25	15
Church Extension . . .	28,945.00	(4,174.45)	2,194.80	8
World Missions. . . . .	247,082.00	13,482.98	33,014.36	13
Personal Support . . .	301,156.00	29,665.25	66,297.12	22
<b>TOTALS . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,740,325.00</b>	<b>\$126,139.33</b>	<b>\$264,162.36</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>TOTALS 2002 . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,521,284.00</b>	<b>\$139,337.75</b>	<b>\$288,120.77</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Goal 17%</b>				

The Evangelism Department received \$8,022.06 in February.

# Editorial Report the news

BS news anchor Dan Rather was being interviewed regarding his recent trip to Iraq and his interview with Saddam Hussein. Rather was asked a couple of times his opinion as to what the U. S. government should do regarding the situation. He was unwilling to say what he thinks. Those things are the government's decision to make, he believes. In his view his job isn't to tell people what to do but to report the news.



**Craig Johnson**  
**Editor**

We who have had the privilege of hearing the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection and have been brought to faith in Christ, now have the responsibility to be news reporters. Jesus said, "you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8, NIV). Witnesses in a courtroom are not asked their opinions. They are asked to state the facts regarding

what they saw and heard. We are called to do the same. Two of the leaders of the early Church, Peter and John, said they could not stop talking about Jesus. "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

The Word of God has declared the news that Jesus Christ has died for sins. "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18). The news has also been made clear that the tomb could not hold Him. "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead" (I Corinthians 15:20). "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact" (Acts 2:32).

It is not just wishful thinking or a nice-sounding story. It is true. It actually happened. It is incredible, life-transforming news. Jesus did suffer and die in our place. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Christ, who was placed in the tomb, was raised to life again. "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:24). It is this news that the world needs

to hear. We are called to the same kind of mission as the women who came upon the empty tomb that first Easter morning: "Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead'" (Matthew 28:7).

Not everybody has heard the news. I've known adults who have grown up in the U.S. but aren't really sure what Easter is all about. They have heard bits and pieces of the story but not a clear presentation of the good news.

Others have heard the news many times but still need to keep hearing it again and again. It was the gospel of Christ dying for our sins and being raised again that the apostle Paul wanted to be sure to remind the Corinthians of (I Corinthians 15:1-4). We need constant reminders as well.

Sometimes Christians, instead of being news reporters like Dan Rather, play the role of advice givers like Dr. Phil. We encounter hurting people and we scold them for getting in the trouble they're in. We tell them what they should have done and how they could have avoided such a mess. Then we give some advice for doing better the next time. But tragically, sometimes we don't tell them the good news.

People need to be told of their sinfulness. We don't appreciate the good news and receive it unless we recognize our sin and repent. The Word of God also provides instruction for living, which we should diligently learn and follow. But we must never forget the heart of the Word is the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Apart from the good news all the good advice in the world has little power. Apart from the good news we have no reason to serve and sacrifice. Apart from the good news growth doesn't happen; we have no hope. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:16).

A lady asked me once what my Easter message was going to be about. Her husband said, "I can tell you that: it'll be about the resurrection." I'm glad he knew the core of the message and was confident I was going to share it. The means of presenting the message varies but the core stays the same. We keep reporting the news: the great and glorious news of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

## Sometimes Christians, instead of being news reporters like Dan Rather, are playing the role of advice givers like Dr. Phil.

# ARC Get off the bench

**“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here I am. Send me!’” Isaiah 6:8, NIV**

**A**s a director of a Bible camp, I get kids doing a lot of different things. I often see kids getting together to play basketball, football, baseball, and other team sports. Many times two captains will choose to form two teams. It's amazing to see how important it is for these kids to be chosen. Kids make their presence known to the captain in order to be chosen early. After the teams are chosen, there's an instant camaraderie and anticipation amongst the kids to play well for their team.

I believe Christianity is similar to the idea of being chosen for a team. Most of us don't have trouble relating to that idea. However, as Christ's “team” we often fall short. The difficulty comes when the players chosen for the team decline to get involved in the effort. Here's a short list that may help you determine if you're a “bench-sitter.”

- You are critical or discouraging of those who are participating.
- You believe you have no gifts essential to the team.
- You are older and you think the “younger” people should do more.
- You are younger and you think the “older” peo-

ple should do more.

- You are not actively looking for ways to assist the team.

There is so much work to be done out in the world! People need to know Jesus. God has placed that responsibility squarely upon His team, the Church. In order for us to be effective in carrying out His Great Commission, the whole church needs to be proactive. If some in the church refuse to help the team, the whole church is handicapped and less effective.

So saints, let's get off the bench and get into the game. Start by praying for the Lord to lead you into some form of service. Then be available to do whatever He calls you to do even if it's not what you envisioned. Finally, find ways to encourage all the team members in the various positions God has called them to. It's when the whole team — the body with Christ as our head — is working together that we will experience the strength and power to reach the lost around the world.

— **Eric Westlake**  
*Director*  
*Association Retreat Center*