

THE LUTHERAN 
AMBASSADOR

MARCH 2003

**WAR
and
PEACE**



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Editor: Rev. Craig Johnson
Assistant to the Editor: Ruth Gunderson
Editorial Board: Rev. John Mundfrom, Oryen Benrud, Rev. Jerry Moan, Rev. James L. Johnson.

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For editorial inquiries and information:
The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine
Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441; 763-545-5631; fax 763-545-0079;
e-mail craigj@teleport.com
ruthg@aflc.org

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ENCOURAGING Word

That sinking feeling

Five-year-old Jessica became a bit frightened as lightning flashed and thunder cracked just as she was stepping out of her evening bath. The lights began flickering as she was getting into her pajamas. She remembered the other times when the electricity had gone out and they had lit candles. Now she asked if she could "please sleep in mom's room" because of the storm.



*Kerwin Sletto
Ottawa, Ill.*

Before kissing her parents good-night, Jessica prayed: "Dear God, I hope it doesn't thunder and I hope the lights don't go out." After a brief pause, she continued, "But I thought it over, and you can do what you want. In Jesus' name, Amen." ("Illustrations for Biblical Preaching," Michael Green)

What better way to endure the storms of life but to say, "Thy will be done." We all experience storms in life. These storms may be physical or emotional, but the way to endure these storms is by fixing our eyes upon Jesus and trusting in His will.

In Matthew 14:22-23, Jesus empowered Peter to do what was humanly impossible. Peter walked on water in the middle of the sea in the midst of a great storm. Then, he noticed the wind and the waves and the storm and he began to sink. Now he was in trouble.

It was the same storm with its winds and waves. What made the difference? The difference was in Peter's focus. When he began to focus on the storm, he allowed fear to control him, and he began to sink. Fear controlled Peter because he couldn't control the storm, and he

didn't know what would happen next.

Isn't that the way it is with all of us? When we experience storms in life, storms over which we have no control, we begin to sink under the pressures. We need to do what Peter did — namely, call out to Jesus to rescue us. When Peter called, immediately Jesus reached out and rescued Peter. Peter was safe with Jesus. Was Peter in any danger when he first started walking on the water? Absolutely not. Jesus told Peter he could come. The storm didn't stop, but Jesus enabled Peter to walk on water in the midst of the storm. What does that say to us as we experience times of fear but that we need to call out to Jesus and allow Him to rescue us?

In II Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul experienced a thorn in the flesh that he asked God three times to remove. Each time, God said no. "He said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I would rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." The storms remain, but by the power of Christ, we will endure and we will be blessed.

I don't know what storm of life you may be experiencing today. It may be a physical storm or an emotional storm. The way to overcome that sinking feeling is to call out to the Lord and focus your eyes on Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 calls us to "trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." He will empower you with whatever you need to endure the storm, for you are safe in the hands of Christ.

SOUND BITES

The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.

—Oswald Chambers

To be authentic Christians, to be able to serve our civic neighbors throughout the world, Christians need to be involved as real citizens in real governments, exhibiting a genuinely Christian public ethic.

— James W. Skillen

We have no government armed in power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. ... Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.

— John Adams

First fill the world with real Christians before you attempt to rule it in a Christian and evangelical manner. This you will never accomplish; for the world and the masses are and always will be un-Christian, even if they are all baptized and Christian in name.

— Martin Luther
“Temporal Authority”



A TIME FOR WAR?

A primer on Just War Theory

By Pastor Jerry Moan

Is any war really just?

Wars and rumors of wars.” Jesus’ prophetic words in Matthew 24:6 describe the day in which we live all too well. The war on terrorism only seems to escalate. The threat of nuclear war looms on the horizon. Biological and chemical warfare pose a sobering threat. Where will it all end?

War is a terrible reality on planet earth. Who would not long for the day foretold by the prophet Micah when “nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Micah 4:3, NIV)?

How does a Christian determine what is the just and right response for our nation? Or does such a response even exist? *Is any war really just? If so, on what basis?*

What is “just war theory” and where did it come from?

In the fifth century, Augustine, one of the most influential leaders in the history of the Church, wrestled with this issue of how Christians should view war. He concluded that there are circumstances which, based on Scripture, justify armed conflict. The statement of his “just war theory” has provided



a basic framework for Christian thought for more than 1,500 years.

Christian “just war” theory, simply put, is an attempt to answer two questions: First, when is it permissible and right to wage war? Second, what are the limitations on the ways we wage war? For Augustine, war was viewed as a logical extension of the God-ordained institution of government (Romans 13:1-7).

Not that *all* wars are morally justifiable. Augustine wrote, “It makes a great difference by which causes and under which authorities men undertake the wars that must be waged.” Centuries later, Thomas Aquinas (also citing Romans 13) would reinforce the idea that only legitimate political authorities could wage war. Any use of force by subordinate nobles, private soldiers, criminals, or even the church was viewed as illegitimate.

What makes a war just?

For Augustine, the first requirement was a matter of **proper authority**.

To whom has God entrusted the responsibility to govern? In his day, this was none other than the emperor. Later, it would be kings or princes or elected officials accountable to God for the welfare of their territory.

Proper cause was the next requirement for Augustine. He maintained that the reasons for going to war were every bit as crucial as who authorized the action. He specifically ruled out causes such as “the desire for harming, the cruelty of revenge, the restless and implacable mind, the savageness of revolting, the lust for dominating.” War is justified only in self-defense or the defense of others.

Augustine’s ideas have been expanded over the centuries. In addition to proper authority and proper cause, Christian “just war” theory necessitates that

there be a **reasonable chance of success**. Even if you have good reason to attack, lives may not be sacrificed and taken in futile causes.

A fourth principle demands that force be used **only when non-violent means will not suffice**.

A further requirement is that of **proportionality**. In waging a war, leaders must make sure that the harm caused by their response to aggression does not exceed the harm caused by the aggression itself. Annihilating an enemy nation in response to the attack of a lone terrorist would qualify as an example of disproportion. The principle of proportionality would further require that non-combatants could never, for any reason, be the targets of an attack.

What does the Bible say?

Proponents of “just war” theory throughout history have rooted their convictions in the principles and teachings of Scripture. In the Old Testament it was observed that God’s command (“Thou shalt not kill”) did not prohibit the taking of life by means of capital punishment, in self-defense or time of war. Surely, there was a legitimate “time for war.”

God Himself issued the command to utterly destroy the enemies of Israel on a number of occasions (e.g., Numbers 31:2, 7-11; Deuteronomy 7:2; 1 Samuel 15:3). The conquest of Canaan was an act of obedience according to Joshua 11:23: “So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war.” Proverbs 24:6 offers this sage advice: “For by wise guidance you will wage war and in abundance of counselors there is victory.”

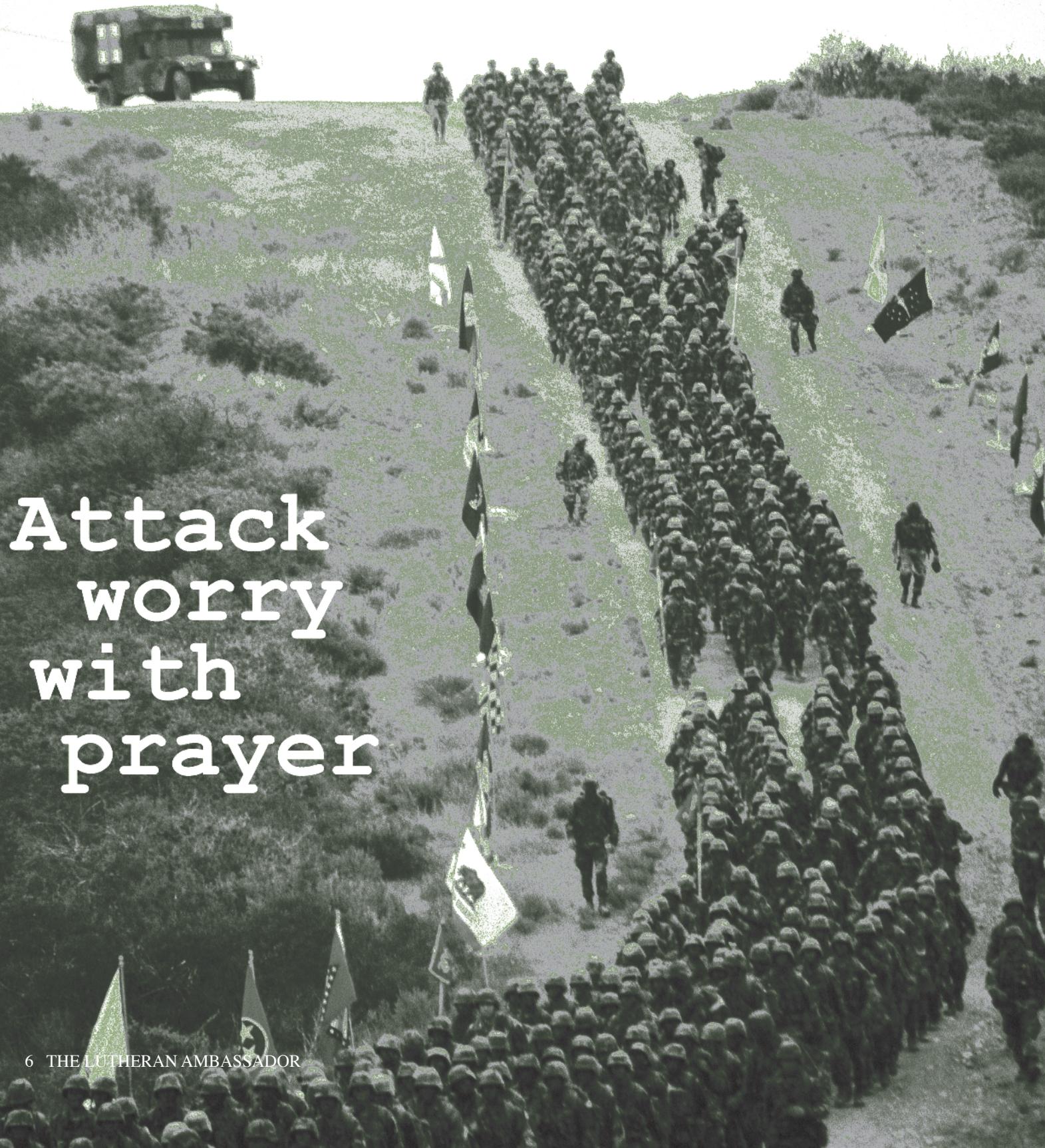
In the New Testament, the classic text is none other than Romans 13:1-7. It is here that the right to bear arms (“the sword”) is granted to civil authority as God’s established “servant,” (or “agent of wrath”) commissioned to punish wrongdoers (cf. 1 Peter 2:13-14).

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven ... a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.”

Ecclesiastes 3:1,8

See JUST WAR, page 12

PRAYER WARRIORS



Attack
worry
with
prayer

Throughout the United States, people are in turmoil because of war. But no protestor, stock market investor, or politician is nearly concerned about the outcome of a war as is the wife of the soldier fighting in the battle. When war comes to the living room of a family in our own church or community, the justification for war and all of the speeches means little.

How does an ordinary Christian even begin to pray for the families who have a loved one serving in today's Armed Forces? Knowing how to pray begins with understanding the needs of the families. It would be presumptuous to try and speak for all families of our Armed Forces, but I suggest that there are some basic issues that are universal.

Pray for a spiritual covering over them

Souls are frequently open to the Lord during times of crisis. Many families will attend church, some for the first time, when they are worried about the safety of a loved one. Pray that the Word of God would be truly heard and received. This may be the one opportunity for many people to respond to the saving message of Jesus Christ. For the message to be heard, it must also be truthfully proclaimed, so we need to pray that pastors, chaplains, and Christian witnesses would lovingly present Jesus as the one true help in this hour.

Pray for emotions

Any reasonable person would be concerned about the welfare of someone facing armed combat. That concern, however, may quickly escalate to anxiety and worry. During the last Gulf War, several of the wives whose husbands were sent overseas spent almost every waking moment in front of the television watching CNN. Continuous live broadcasts from the war were not necessarily in the best interests of the wives. The more they saw and heard on the television, the more frightened they became. Some became so obsessed with the news that they were unable to care for their children. How grateful many of these women were to gather for a support group, and then to be encouraged to turn the TV off and engage in activities with their children.

Praying for emotional strength and encouragement is to ask the Creator of our emotions to give that wonderful peace that passes all understanding. We may use a passage of Scripture, such as Romans

8, to pray specifically for the needs of the family members and soldiers. Pray down the power of the precious promises that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose" and that nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:28,39 NIV).

Human minds tend to think up the most terrifying situations. It is also very natural to hear only the information we want to hear. Pray that the family members would be clear minded and make right decisions. Wives must often make decisions about finances, child rearing, or other issues that were previously made by their husbands alone or at least with their help.

Pray for their safety

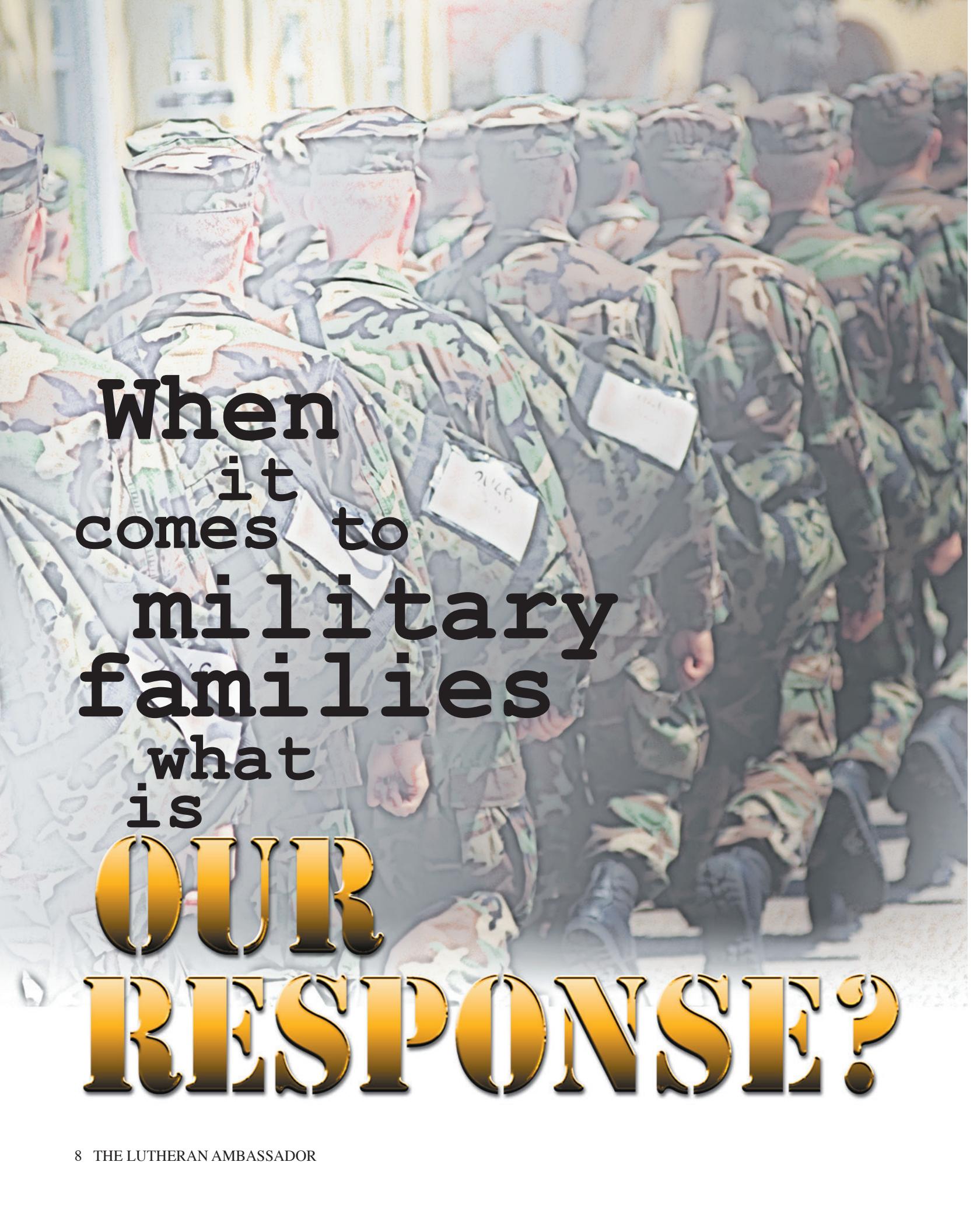
As we pray for the safety of the members of our armed forces and their families, we need to keep in mind that many will face death or injury. The Psalmist wrote: "You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more" (Psalm 10:17,18). For all who mourn and for all who must face untold obstacles, there is the Defender of the fatherless and the afflicted. Only God can fully understand the pain and loss in the hearts and homes broken by death. Pray that those who face this tremendous heartache will be open to receiving the presence of the Heavenly Father.

There is a powerful ministry of prayer before every Christian during this terrible time of crisis. More soldiers were converted and baptized into Christ during the Gulf War than in the entire Army during the previous five years. These conversions took place in some of the most repressive governments on earth where it is a capital offense to become a Christian. God is not limited by war, oppressive regimes, or even our fears.

God can replace worry with hope, anxiety with calmness, and death with the confidence of the resurrection. God can also make his church into a powerful source for good as His people pray specifically for the needs of the military and its family members.

— Pastor Tim Skramstad
Living Word Lutheran Church
Eagan, MN
Director of AFLC Military Chaplains





When
it
comes to
military
families
what
is
**OUR
RESPONSE?**

As the specter of war once again is upon us, it is important for the Christian community to effectively utilize the time and opportunity that is before us, for the Kingdom's sake. Our response to those in the military and their families will reflect upon whether or not we truly do love others as Christ has loved us. How do we reach out to military members and their families in these difficult times?

Reach out in prayer

Prayer is our most effective means of help, because rather than merely applying human effort to help, we are applying the limitless resources of God Himself. Prayer is not the last resort of the Christian community, it is our first resort. The promises of God's Word concerning the power of prayer and His willingness to intervene in human endeavors are many, and God is faithful to His Word.

Prayer for the military should be specific in these times: name the names, remember those who are serving in the military at Sunday morning worship and other times when the congregation meets. Make up a prayer list of those who are in the military and keep it in the bulletin and before the eyes of the congregation. Pray also for the military and government leadership, that they might seek peace and use wisdom in decision making. Pray for the world situation, and pray specifically that hearts might be open to the Lord in these uncertain times, for the Christians to be bold in proclaiming the way of salvation in Jesus.

Intercessory prayer changes the course of human events as our Lord intervenes, to His glory. May we be diligent to apply this primary tool of Christendom in lifting up our soldiers and their families. Separation is a hardship unto itself, and it is all the more felt when the threat of war compounds the issue. Pray for marriages and relationships that will feel this strain, even as we pray for the safe return of our military members.

Keep in contact

Let the military families KNOW that you are remembering them in prayer. Letters, cards and other means of contact are important. Use the email, snail-mail, and whenever possible, the personal visit to let our military families know they are being remembered. Regular contact, even a brief card, is important. I cannot tell you how often a postcard would lift the spirit at just the needed time when I was away from family in military service. It does not take much — just the reminder that you are being prayed over and thought of, knowing you and your family have not been forgotten. If you know of mili-

tary families who have been left behind as the military has deployed, invite them to your home for dinner, or even just an afternoon coffee visit. Use the resources of the congregation to see that special chores get taken care of, and let both the family and the soldier know that you are there for the family if special needs arise. Young wives with children are especially in need of support in these times, as they cope with all of the challenges without their spouse to help. Youth work teams and social events can all be helpful in their place. And, most important, just a listening ear and comforting presence can help. Our news services, which so sensationalize events without giving much in the way of fact, often cause great distress for families during these times. So be ready to simply be there and be a listening ear when the times become especially stressful.

Give them your support

We may or may not agree with the policies of our nation. But we need to recognize the truism that the military does not make policy, it is merely an instrument of our government in carrying out the policy. The lingering tragedy of the Vietnam era is how our returning veterans were treated, as if they were to blame for the unpopular conflict. May we as Christians never make that mistake! The soldiers go where they are sent, they do what duty requires, and it is not our place to stand in judgment of them. After all, it is we who have sent them, as citizens of this nation. Our votes, our elected officials, are what dictate the foreign policy of our nation. Our military "citizen-soldiers" deserve our respect and support for protecting our nation's interests and allowing us to enjoy our freedoms. Our contact with them must be free of a critical spirit and full of the love and concern of Christ.

Expand your fellowship

We tend to become introspective and self-centered in times of conflict, yet it is the very time we need to reach out and be open to those around us. See the hurts, the needs, and respond with the good news of the gospel! Especially in times of conflict, we need to be about our Great Commission task, making the most of opportunities for souls to be saved, for the message to go forth. God is calling YOU to war today, in the war for eternal souls. Our response to our military personnel and their families is just one of the many "theatres of operation" in that war.

— **Pastor Michael Crowell**
Mission Aviation Training Academy
Arlington, Wash.



Surviving the *storms*

of
life

There is no end to the work ahead. Yes, many problems have been worked out but up ahead are 50 more to deal with. Family problems, health issues, problems at work, loss of a loved one, conflict at church — the weight of the things we deal with sometimes seem too much to bear. Everyone is pulling at you for your time or attention and you are left wondering how to survive. What happens to a person who is being pulled apart like this? Burnout!

The prophet Elijah had plenty of storms to deal with in his life. He experienced one of the greatest victories in the Old Testament on Mount Carmel in which God defeated the prophets of Baal. But as soon as the victory was declared, Queen Jezebel was after Elijah to persecute and kill him. He was a renegade. There seemed to be no end to the stress — no resolution to these problems, despite being faithful to the Lord.

Elijah runs away to a cave, escaping his problems, and feeling sorry for himself asking, “Why me?” Then, as he is sitting in the cave, the Lord speaks to him:

The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:11-12).

God used this whole situation to teach Elijah (and us) something about surviving the storms of life. Elijah was in the midst of a terrible storm, which symbolized the enemies of God who wished to destroy him. The storm was *not* the Lord. Elijah was surrounded by violence and danger and felt the pressure of being alone and knowing he had to remain faithful to God. How impossible it seemed.

Job had a similar experience as he lost nearly everything that he held valuable through the persecution of Satan. Even his closest friends attacked him, claiming he was suffering because of his own sins. But he remained faithful to the Lord. And then, after his friends had spoken, the Lord entered the scene: “Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm” (Job 40:6). God came to Job in the midst of the greatest “storm” of his life and spoke to him, giving Job comfort and peace.

Centuries later another storm threatened to destroy: “A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, ‘Mas-

ter, Master, we’re going to drown!’” (Luke 8:23b-24a).

Where I grew up on the flat prairies of Minnesota we would often see furious thunderstorms coming in from the west. Black rolling clouds swirling in every direction. Soon the wind would hit, hail would fall and in the worst case, a tornado would touch down threatening to destroy everything in its path. It can be frightening and deadly but that’s an expected risk if you live in the Midwest.

We haven’t all experienced tornadoes, but most of us have been in situations in which we feel like the storms in life are too great for us to handle. We see the dark clouds and feel the wind and the hail and fear it may destroy us. But we have to remember that storms are a normal part of life. No believer will go through life without conflict, deadlines, attack, persecution, grief and sadness. The question is: what do you do when you are in the midst of that storm? Do you run and hide? Do you give it all up and resign? Do you cry out, “Why me?”

We must do as Elijah did: Listen to the voice of the Lord in the gentle breeze. God was there for him all the time wanting to encourage, strengthen, and uphold his faithful servant, but the problem was, he was paying attention to the storm going on in his life and wasn’t listening for the Lord. What seems like a disaster to us is a minor issue to the Lord — it’s *just* a storm. While the disciples screamed out in their great fear, “We’re going to drown,” Jesus matter-of-factly got up and asked them, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm” (Matthew 8:26).

Jesus says, in the midst of our troubles and worries, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). May we, too, in the midst of the storms all around us be quiet enough to listen to the Savior and be strengthened and calmed and blessed by him. That is the only way to survive.

— **Pastor Tim Hinrichs**
Missionary to Poland

No believer will go through life without conflict, deadlines, attack, persecution, grief and sadness. The question is: what do you do when you are in the midst of that storm?

Why are some Christians against “just war” thinking?

There is disagreement over the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Pacifists generally appeal to the New Testament’s supposedly “superior” law of love, even though this concept is clearly rooted in the Old Testament. Christian pacifists contend that one cannot follow the example of Jesus and resort to the use of force. Rather, Scripture calls us to “seek peace and pursue it” (Psalm 34:14), and asserts that “Wisdom is better than weapons of war” (Ecclesiastes 9:18). Christians are to turn the other cheek when mistreated rather than to retaliate.

There is disagreement over whether a Christian, as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, ought to participate in the earthly, political arena (including service in the military).

Humanistic and politically liberal thinking has infiltrated large mainline church bodies, misleading many. In Luther’s era, Erasmus argued that war was unnatural and unfitting for human beings and that even so-called “just wars” are morally unacceptable. Aquinas, on the other hand, had maintained that war can be a means to a *just* peace as well as a means to destroy an *unjust* peace (e.g., Nazi rule of occupied lands during World War II).

Was Martin Luther an advocate of “just war” theory?

Some would contend that the unique position of the Old Testament patriarchs, being commanded to fight, makes their example irrelevant for New Testament Christians who lack such a command. Here’s how Luther replies:

This objection is answered clearly enough by St. Peter and St. Paul, who both command obedience to worldly ordinances and to the commandments of worldly rulers even under the New Testament [Rom. 13:1–4; I Pet. 2:13–14]. And we have already pointed out that St. John the Baptist instructed soldiers as a Christian teacher and in a Christian manner and permitted them to remain soldiers, enjoining them only not to use their position to abuse people or to treat them unjustly, and to be satisfied with their wages. Therefore even under the New Testament the sword is established by God’s word and commandment, and those who use it properly and fight obediently serve God and are obedient to his word.

Just think now! If we gave in on this point and admitted that war was wrong in itself, then we would have to give in on all other points and allow that the use of the sword was entirely wrong. For if it is wrong to use a sword in war, it is also wrong to use a sword to punish evildoers or to keep the peace. Brief-

ly, every use of the sword would have to be wrong. For what is just war but the punishment of evildoers and the maintenance of peace?

If one punishes a thief or a murderer or an adulterer, that is punishment inflicted on a single evildoer; but in a just war a whole crowd of evildoers, who are doing harm in proportion to the size of the crowd, are punished at once. If, therefore, one work of the sword is good and right, they are all good and right ...

If worldly rulers call upon them to fight, then they ought to and must fight and be obedient, not as Christians, but as members of the state and obedient subjects. Christians therefore do not fight as individuals or for their own benefit, but as obedient servants of the authorities under whom they live. (“Luther’s Works,” Vol. 46, The Christian in Society)

In similar fashion, the *Augsburg Confession*, in Article XVI dealing with “Civil Affairs,” openly affirms the rightness of engaging in just wars or serving as soldiers.

How does the theory apply in this age of terrorism?

Robert P. George, professor of jurisprudence at Princeton University and author of *In Defense of Natural Law*, affirms: “The use of military force against terrorist networks and regimes abetting their crimes is certainly justifiable. These networks and regimes have, by their repeated attacks, made it abundantly clear that they will not be deterred from committing additional atrocities by anything short of force. Our leaders are, in my judgment, morally obligated to use as much force as necessary, subject to the principles of just warfare, to protect innocent Americans and other potential victims of terrorism. It would be an injustice for them to fail to employ the necessary force.”

So then, is there, legitimately, “a time for war?”

The answer, on the basis of Scripture, would have to be yes. As a nation, we would do well to take to heart the time-tested guidance found in Augustine and Luther. This does not mean blindly following the leadership of our government whenever the war drums are beaten. We know that to condone or participate in a war requires careful moral reflection. We also know that as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, we have this great responsibility to pray. Specifically, pray for needed wisdom for our leaders and for God’s just will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven.



Peace Maker

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

Matthew 5:9

The days in which we live could very well be described in the famous opening words of "A Tale of Two Cities" written by Charles Dickens: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ..." Some of the same technology that enables us to travel freely and rapidly has been used to frighten, intimidate and kill innocent victims of terrorists. How is the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to respond to terrorism and its threats? Where would a person even begin to try to make a difference?

To see how a person can be a peacemaker in a world of terrorism, we need to think about several important relationships.

You and God

First, one's relationship with God is essential. Do you have peace with God? This peace is not just a feeling of the heart. Rather, it is a right relationship with God — to be at peace with God, instead of fighting against His will and purpose for your life. God has revealed in His Word the problem. Romans 3:17 tells about people in their natural condition: "And the path of peace have they not known."

Romans 5:1 explains how we can find that peace: "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." When a person trusts in and depends upon Jesus' perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering and death to pay for the sins of the whole world and His resurrection from the dead, then that person finds true peace with God.

You and others

Second, the believer is called to make peace with other people. It is easy to be nice to those who are pleasant and kind. It is easy to like those individuals and nations who are allies of the U.S. But what about those people or peoples who are our sworn enemies? Jesus said, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Pray for them. Forgive them. Those are not easy words to hear, and harder still to put into practice. It is especially difficult when someone does not want to confess wrongs or seek forgiveness. What is a Christian to do in this situation? We find the solution in Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

Reconciliation

Third, the believer is to call others to be reconciled to God through Jesus. In II Corinthians 5:18-20, this relationship is explained, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

The believer is an ambassador seeking to help establish peace between sinful, rebelling people and their Creator. Many Christians are not sure how to be an ambassador,

reaching others with the good news about Jesus. Sure, you can be a friend to others who look like you or work in the same profession. But what about those who are different from you? How about those international college students who have family and friends thousands of miles away? Have you invited them over for an American meal? You might be surprised how quickly they bring up spiritual issues in the conversation, like, "Why do you have so many different kinds of churches?"

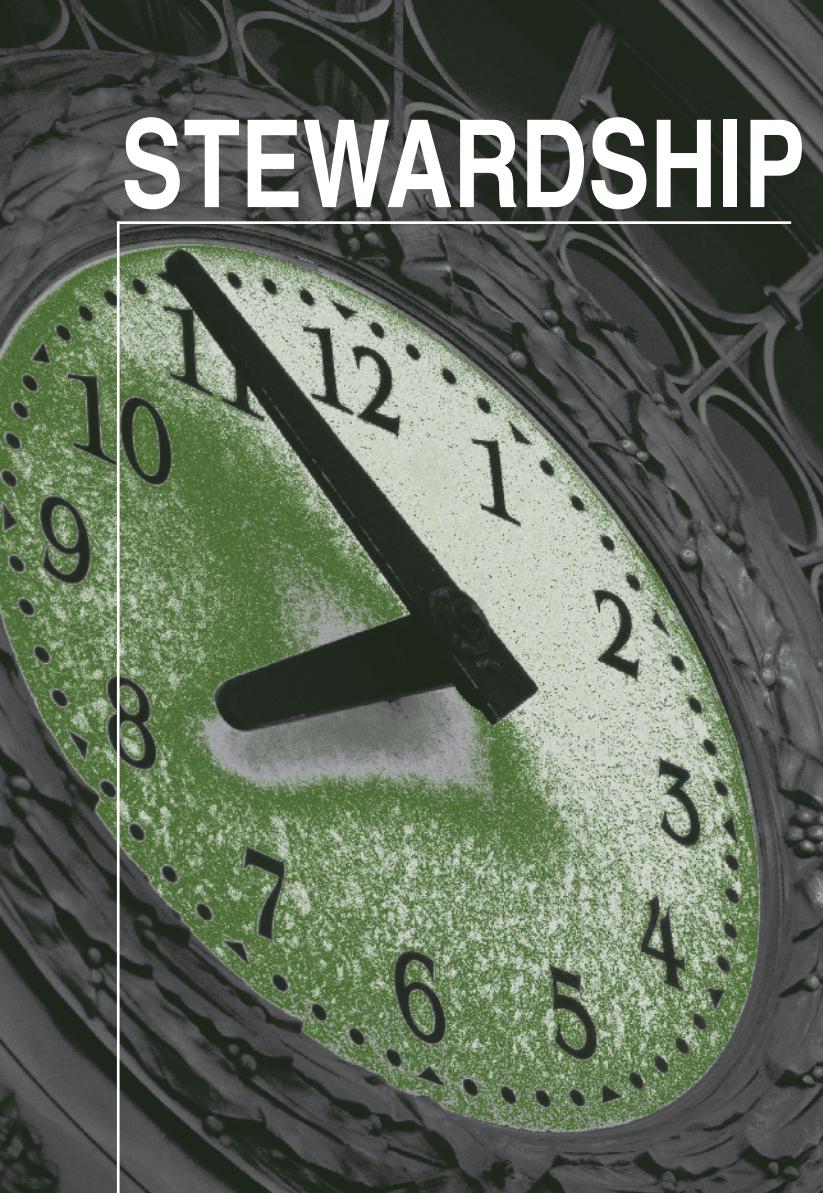
What about the refugees or other unreached people groups who might be living close to your house? My wife, Sarah, and I recently brought our kids to the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn. We were overwhelmed at the large number of Somalis who were there. We could not help but wonder how many of them have experienced Jesus' love by the kind words and actions of Christians in the community. How many Muslim students who study at the many colleges and universities in the U.S. have been invited to enjoy some time with an American family? Sometimes it is hard to tell people about Jesus. It is even harder when there is not a relationship of trust between people.

Do you have peace with God? Are you seeking to live at peace with those around you? Would you be willing to help others find peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ? This is what being a peacemaker is all about.

— **David Nelson**
Christian Free Lutheran
Wheatland, Iowa



STEWARDSHIP TIME



Are you at war or peace?

Send me an e-mail, leave me a voice mail, I need to talk to you right now, it's urgent! What's your cell number? Sorry honey, I won't be home for supper tonight, I have a meeting. Tell Johnny I'll catch his next game ... I promise.

Sound familiar? Some of these expressions may not pertain to you, but it seems to me that life just gets busier and busier; there is more pressure to do more things with our time.

God's Word encourages us to be good stewards, not only of our possessions, but also our relationships and our time. A steward is a manager or supervisor entrusted with that which belongs to another. If we truly believe that, then we must acknowledge that God owns our time and we are challenged to be good managers of it.

As Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 4:1-4, the primary prerequisites for being a good steward is faithfulness, reliability, dependability and trustworthiness. It says nothing about a steward having to be brilliant or successful.

How can one stop the time war and become at peace with the demands on our time? As I stated above, we must be faithful. All things are possible through God, and if we are faithful and trust Him, He will help us with even the most difficult time-related issues.

We are wise to look to Jesus as our perfect example of a man successfully handling the demands of His day. It is stated numerous times that He rose early to pray, seeking His Father's advice. He was at peace knowing He was doing his Father's will. If we were to follow Jesus' example, we would be wise starting each day in prayer seeking our Father's will.

Ephesians 5:15-16 says, "Be very careful then how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil." Proper time stewardship comes down to deciding what is important. You might consider making a quick mental list of the things you value. No doubt your list would include your loved ones, your home, your church and perhaps a few possessions. Would it also include your time? We are to make the most of every opportunity because time is precious.

Consider this: If someone takes away your money, you may not like it but you can earn more. If you lose your job or even your house, it would be difficult, but you can probably get another job or another house. But if something takes your time and wastes it, you can never recapture it. That time is gone, never to be retrieved. That makes time a very valuable thing. What are you doing with the time God has given you? Are you at war with your time stewardship or has God granted you His peace? If He hasn't, I encourage you to seek His will and wait for His blessings.

— **David Bjornson**
AFLC Stewardship Board
Valley City, N.D.

At the FOOT of the CROSS

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

So how does the Church bring the redemptive work of Christ to the homosexual? How can we witness to the unconverted or at least avoid causing alienation?

- First, keep in mind that not all people who experience same-sex attractions want to deal with those feelings by getting into the gay lifestyle. There are many who just wish those attractions would go away and

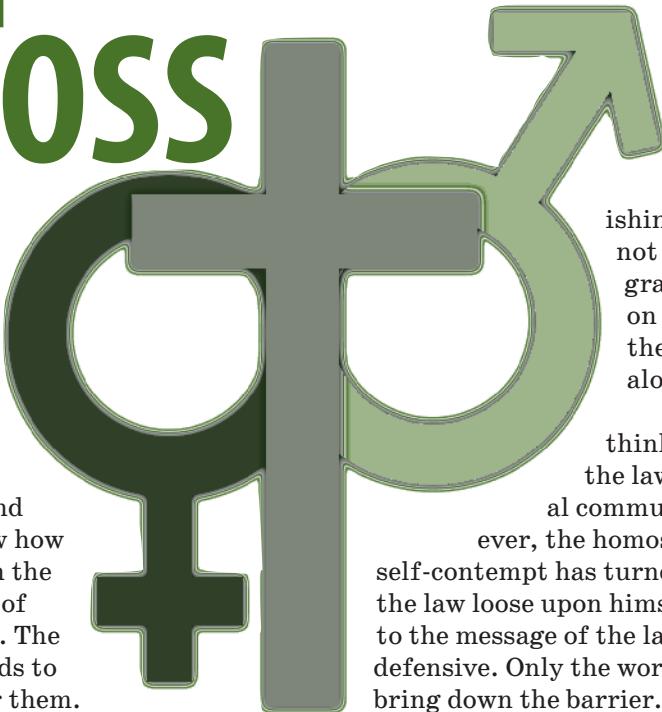
do not know how to deal with the onslaughts of temptation. The Church needs to be there for them.

- Second, the Church needs to stop putting this sin in a special category. To be an effective witness, we must begin by realizing

how great is our own need for forgiveness. A Christian who cannot admit to his or her own sins cannot effectively call another to repentance. The moral ground is truly level at the foot of the cross. While the liberal churches have erred in giving the homosexual permission to pursue a life of sin, the conservative churches have often erred in condemning homosexuality as worse than all other sins.

Homosexuals have often experienced a great deal of rejection from parents, peers and neighbors. They will sometimes test others' sincerity by attempting to shock them with a description of the extent of their sins. While there is no need to hear the intimate details, Christian people cannot help homosexuals if we react emotionally to their confessions. We must be prepared, whatever they confess, to assure them that God can and will forgive the truly penitent. However great our sin, Jesus is a greater Savior.

- Third, be alert for attitudes that show a distorted image of God, and make sure you have not fallen for the same distortions. Many people tend to project onto God the attributes they saw in their parents growing up. If the parents were critical, God is seen as critical; if the parents were untrustworthy, God is seen as untrustworthy. So many homosexuals, because of the difficulty they had with their earthly fathers, perceive God in the



This is the second in a three-part series on deliverance from homosexuality. This article focuses on being a witness to the gay community.

role of the punishing father. They do not see Him as the gracious Atonement on the cross. So push the message of grace alone!

Many Christians think they need to hurl the law at the homosexual community. Often, however, the homosexual's own self-contempt has turned the full fury of the law loose upon himself. The response to the message of the law is to become defensive. Only the word of grace can bring down the barrier. If you speak a word of grace, and you are not permitted

to go further, you have done your job. You do not know what God can do in someone's life when he or she encounters unexpected kindness.

- Fourth, the best time to witness to a homosexual is after the break-up of a relationship. He or she may be in a pit of depression, in suicidal despair, and ready to consider life lived under God's grace. Do be sensitive to the pain of the break-up; although there was sin in the relationship, it is perfectly acceptable to empathize with the person's sense of loss. There was probably a lot of good in the relationship as well, and feel free to acknowledge that. Criticism of the former partner will not enhance your witness.

- Fifth, do confront gay theology. It's all based on self-will and proof-texting. Avoid getting sucked into an argument about whether homosexuality is a sin or not; it's better to be matter-of-fact about the sin and keep focused on the deliverance and freedom offered by Jesus.

- Sixth, do not assume that the homosexual is not already a Christian. Many of them do profess faith in Jesus and have no idea how to use their faith to overcome the same-sex attractions. Some assumed that their same-sex attractions were a sign that God had rejected them.

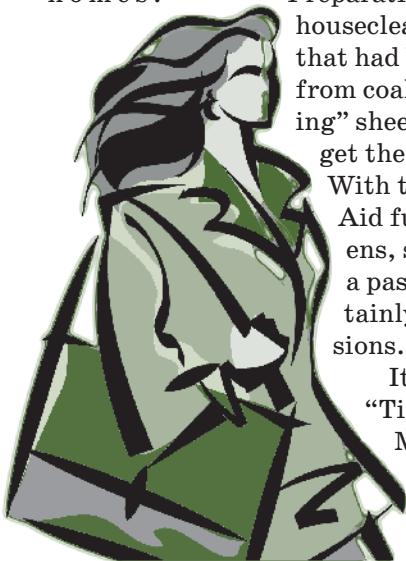
In the testimonies of converted homosexuals emerges a consistent theme: some ordinary Christian person was willing to step out of their comfort zone, share the gospel, and show love. Homosexuals are no easier or harder to lead to the Lord than anyone else. The same grace that turned Saul the persecutor into Paul the apostle is still turning militant homosexuals into ministry leaders.

WMF Changes

Changes — we see them all around us. How does the word “change” affect our women’s ministry, the WMF?

The Israelites changed. They were quick to adopt the ways of their neighbors. The Lord lamented, “They went far from Me” (Jeremiah 2:5). The Pharisees, years later, would not change. They clung tightly to tradition. Jesus asked them, “Why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?” (Matthew 15:3). Both missed the blessing God intended for them.

Older women recall when Ladies Aid met in homes.



Preparation involved a real housecleaning, washing walls that had been dusted by soot from coal stoves and “stretching” sheer curtains on frames to get them to hang straight. With their funds, the Ladies Aid furnished church kitchens, sometimes helped with a pastor’s salary and certainly contributed to missions.

It is no surprise to say, “Times have changed.”

Many women go from home to work each day. After that they chauffeur children to vari-

ous lessons and events. Finding time to go to church for WMF seems more difficult than ever.

I believe several things once were and are still true:

First, women need to know more about each other than just names. Titus 2:4 says that older women should instruct younger ones. It is also true that younger women are encouragers to older ones.

Second, our focus is on the need we have to know Jesus. Times of study and prayer and sharing are ways we do that.

Third, our ministry extends beyond our own congregation. The Great Commission of Christ still holds.

As the ways of women change, what do we as an organization hold on to? How do we introduce women to Jesus, teach and encourage women in their faith and reach out to others beyond our community?

What might we change? The time and place of meetings? The length of meetings? What we serve? What we do? Our attitude? Our priorities? I believe God will give answers as we pray and talk and continue to reach out.

What should not change? Matthew 27:55 tells of women “who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him.” Their example is a pattern for us — hundreds of years and many changes later.

— *Dee Berkas*

*Calvary Lutheran
Wallace, S.D.*

Worship Him in Spirit and in Truth

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: _____

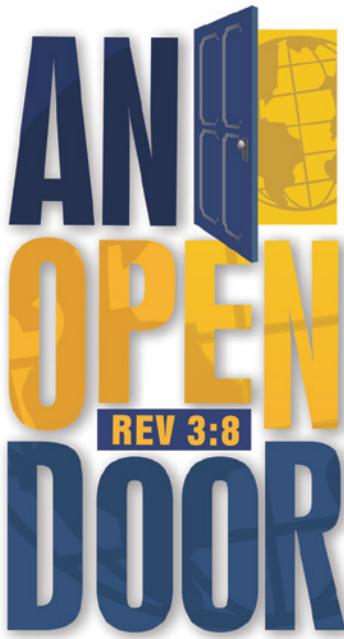
Check which workshop you will attend

Workshop I: How to do a Mission Festival

Led by Carol Knapp _____

Workshop II: Telling Yourself the Truth

Led by Kristie Nelson _____



2003 Annual Conference

June 11-15 Brookings Area Multiplex, Brookings, S.D.

HOSTED BY:

Grace Lutheran, Bruce, S.D.

(605) 627-5445

Calvary Free Lutheran,

Arlington, S.D.

(605) 983-5254

Abiding Savior Free Lutheran,
Sioux Falls, S.D.

Christ the King Free Lutheran,
Pipestone, Minn.

REGISTRATION FEES

With one copy of Annual Report

\$30 Single or \$40 couple

Plus cost of meals

Make checks payable to AFLC
and send to 3110 E. Medicine

Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441.

Registrations received after June 1 must
add a \$5 late fee.

Complete form below

Circle one

Name: _____ pastor/visiting pastor/lay delegate/lay visitor

Spouse: _____ pastor/visiting pastor/lay delegate/lay visitor

Address: _____ City/state/zip: _____

Phone (D): _____ (E): _____ Congregation: _____

LODGING Hotels

Super 8: (800) 800-8000

Fairfield Inn: (800) 228-2800

Brookings Inn: (877) 831-1562

Comfort Inn: (800) 228-5150

Staurolite Inn: (605) 692-9421

Camping

Sexauer Park

Brookings, S.D.

Limited motorhome spots
Call 605-692-2708 to reserve

Oakwood Lakes State Park
22 miles from Brookings
Call 800-710-2267

Lake Poinsett Recreation Area
23 miles west
Call 800-710-2267

Visit www.aflc.org for more information

	MEAL	COST	#	TOTAL
THURSDAY	Schools breakfast	\$4.50		
	Conference lunch	\$5.50		
	Chaplain's lunch	\$5.50		
	Builders fellowship lunch	\$6.50		
	Schools Corp. dinner	\$8.50		
FRIDAY	Missions Corp. breakfast	\$4.50		
	Conference lunch	\$5.50		
	ARC Corp. lunch	\$7.85		
	Pastors banquet	\$12.25		
SAT	Foundation lunch	\$5.50		
	Youth banquet	\$5.00		
	SUBTOTAL			
	Registration fee			
	TOTAL			

VISION 2004



A time to gather in

As a chairman of the Vision 2004 capital campaign committee, I am charged with communicating the challenge to raise funds as directed by the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees. I consider it a privilege to talk with fellow AFLC members and friends about this. As in the words of

John 17:20-23, I believe Jesus is for us and wants us to work together to expand His kingdom. God has placed the resources in our midst to meet the goals of Vision 2004.

I strive to be simple and direct as I talk about the financial opportunities to complete this project. The Bible has much to say about how we handle our money and possessions. It is appropriate, then, to be simple and direct as Jesus was when it comes to money.

The entire Vision 2004 project is estimated at \$11 million. The student center alone will cost more than \$3 million. We need a minimum of \$2 million in cash and commitments by the end of March to begin building the student center.

Each congregation is asked to communicate the Vision 2004 message this month to their members, asking each one to prayerfully consider what God would have them do. We are asking for three-year commitments from individuals or congregations according to their means. A deadline of March 31 has been set to gather in both cash and commitments so that plans for the new student center can go forward this spring.

Martin Luther once said: "People go through three conversions in the Christian life: their head, their heart and their pocketbook — unfortunately, not all at the same time."

Whether you give from assets or income, God says you are more blessed to give than to receive. Whether you are a widow who has \$1 to give, a millionaire with \$10 million extra or anything in between, God loves a



Steve Jankord
Vision 2004

cheerful giver. When we realize it all comes from God in the first place and we are His stewards, then God receives all the glory, honor and praise.

I do not know an amount to challenge each of you to give. But I do know that to get this project complete it will take all of us to get involved. God distributes resources to each of us differently — we need to give according to our means.

I would like to thank the founders of the AFLC, who 40 years ago founded an association that is led by the Spirit of God, instructed by the Word of God and has one Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Praise be to God for His marvelous gift.

I also want to thank the AFLC members and friends who have been so faithful to give. We are blessed already by overcoming many challenges: dealing with the Plymouth City Council, building the first married student housing unit, and the completion of site work. The members of the Schools Corporation are united in the goal of starting to build the student center this spring. Members of the AFLC Schools Board of Trustees have given final approval to the design work. I pray that each of us will continue to be faithful to Him and His work until He comes again.

Paul says in Philippians 4:17: "Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account."

Jesus told us to shift our treasures (assets) from things that fade away, are destroyed or burn up. He tells us to invest in things that will last, not just 40 years, but for eternity. Jesus also said that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. This spring offers a great opportunity to invest in Vision 2004, in something that will produce much fruit for eternity. May God bless you as you give.



Steve and his family became involved with the AFLC when they moved to Sioux Falls, S.D., in 1997. Along with his family, he is actively involved at Abiding Savior in Sioux Falls. He believes the Bible school and seminary are key to expanding the AFLC's work to complete the Great Commission. Steve would love to see more people enjoy the benefits of the Bible school and seminary. He says the school's faithfulness to teaching the Word of God is unique in today's society and worthy of our prayerful financial support.

Bring her home

During the summer of 2001, 25 students traveled across this country not knowing what to expect from the FLY Convention. Among these students was a junior in high school named Jen. The Lord had already touched Jen before the convention started when an anonymous person donated the money for her to go. She was certainly blessed and thankful to the Lord for that.

However, Jen will admit that her heart was not entirely in the right place going into this trip. She was looking forward to what God was going to do in her life, but she was more concerned about spending quality time with her friends. Throughout the week, Jen was seeking after the Lord asking Him to teach her and to guide her. God answered Jen in a big way. However, it was not at camp, but through an experience on the way home.

God knew that trust was a huge issue in Jen's life. She had a hard time giving control of her life to God. After the convention ended, our youth group arrived at the Denver Airport to find out that our connecting flight to Chicago and on to Pittsburgh had been cancelled. I literally scrambled across the airport trying to get my students home. After a few hours of working with the airlines, we got it all figured out. I pulled a group of six away from the rest and we ran to another



gate where they were to board the plane and fly to Washington, D.C. I told Jen she was in charge, and asked her if she could handle it. Her first reaction was no and that she was going to make the Denver Airport her permanent residence. However, the Lord gave her the courage and strength to get on that plane. As the group was flying toward Washington, they joined hands and prayed that God would get all of them home and that He would calm their hearts and minds.

Jen learned how important it is to trust the Lord with everything. Today, Jen is a college freshman. Moving away from home was difficult for her, but learning from the past has helped her face that move. God is in control of Jen's life. That is very evident to all who meet her. Jen learned that if God loves us enough to take care of us in all circumstances, who is she to say that she doesn't need Him. Her life matters to Him, and He knows what she needs on an everyday basis. He loves her enough to bring her home to Him, wherever she is.

— *Daniel Keinanen*
Youth Director
Ruthfred Lutheran
Bethel Park, Pa.



**The 2003 FLY Convention
will be July 21-26 at Estes
Park, Colo. Call (763) 545-
5631 for more information,
or visit www.aflc.org/youth**



The members of Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz., recently purchased this building and property. They have engaged the work of a draftsman who will work with an architect to certify plans for a renovation project. The congregation is working on getting approval of a building permit to begin the project, which includes renovations and an addition. Once the permit is approved, the congregation is asking for volunteer workers to assist in the project. There is a need for carpenters, electricians, contractors, plumbers, cooks and prayer warriors. A missions work trip through FLAPS is planned this spring. Contact Lavon Bohling at AFLC headquarters for more information (763) 545-5631.

Women's event hosted at ARC March 28-30

The WMF will host a Women's Retreat March 28-30 at the ARC, Osceola, Wis. Rose Carlson, author of the 2002 WMF Bible study book on Proverbs, will be the evening speaker. Cheryl Skordahl, national WMF president, will lead morning sessions. Saturday afternoon options include a craft workshop and auction, wellness program and scrap booking.

Registration fee is \$65, with a \$5 late fee after March 17. Call 1-888-748-3969 for more information.

AFLTS Graduates

Rich Carr

My personal testimony began even before my birth on July 18, 1973. While I was still in the womb my mother, Carolyn, prayed over me and dedicated me to the work of the Lord. When I was about 3 years old, my mother told me about Jesus and heaven. She told me that I could have Jesus living in my heart just like she had. At this early age in my life Jesus entered into my heart, bought me and freed me from sin, and set up a sign that read, "A work in progress."

When my father, David, decided to take a job in Pittsburgh, Pa., our family moved to a southern suburb called Bethel Park. After about a year of looking for a good church, my parents decided on Ruthfred Lutheran. It was here that the groundwork for my faith in Christ was built. I would need the strong truths learned in confirmation classes and Sunday school to carry me through some difficult times in my life.

Immediately after graduating from Bethel Park High School, I

joined the Army and ended up stationed in Fort Stewart, Ga. The nearly two and one-half years spent on active duty challenged me physically, mentally and spiritually. I was challenged more than I had ever been challenged in my whole life. It was while I was sitting in my truck in the desert reading my Bible that I felt the call into the ministry again. It was a call I had felt as a little boy, but ignored as I went through high school. The "Hound of Heaven" had pursued me even out in the desert far from home! This time I would obey the calling to prepare, and I decided that after completing my term in the Army, I would start my preparation for the ministry.

After finishing studies at Community College of Allegheny County in Pennsylvania, I went to California University of Pennsylvania to finish my Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology. One week after graduating with honors I married the love of my life, Brenda Funaiock. The Lord blessed us with our first daughter, Lydia, on Nov. 14, 2000, our second daughter, Chloe, on Dec. 7, 2001,



and we are expecting our third child this August. I now serve at Hope Lutheran Church of Minneapolis as part of my internship assignment.

The highlight of my training is the conviction for more world mission work based on John 14:6, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" I realized that if I really believe that Jesus truly is the only way to God, then I should care about the millions who are dying and going to hell. I should care about people all around the world who have never heard the name Jesus Christ.



Brent Logeman

My hometown is Metropolis, Ill., where I am currently serving my home congregation of Faith Lutheran Church. I am 40 years old, having been born Oct. 7, 1962, to Ralph and JoAnn Logeman. I graduated from Metropolis High School in 1981. I spent two years at John A. Logan Community College in Carterville, Ill., before completing my Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering at Southern Illinois

University-Carbondale in 1985.

It was during my college years at SIU that I came to assurance of salvation. I grew up in a Christian home believing that Jesus died for my sins, but I did not have assurance of salvation. One day in the student center at SIU a man walked up and asked me if I knew that I would go to heaven if I died that night. I told him I believed so. He asked me the same question again, and I gave the same answer. He

See SEMINARY, page 20





New members were accepted at Grace Free Lutheran, DeKalb, Ill. Pictured are (from left) Kimberly Keith, Dale Vesta, Cheryl Sperry (Mrs. Kent Sperry), LeAnne Vesta, Pastor Kent Sperry, and Cindy and Mark Urbaur. Not pictured is Ed Schomperlin.

Missions week

Pastor Rob Lewis, the director of World Mission Prayer League in Canada, led the evening services Jan. 12-14 during the Missions Conference on the campus of the AFLC schools in Plymouth, Minn. Guest lecturers during the two-week interterm session at AFLBS included Pastor Tim Hinrichs, AFLC missionary in Poland, Pastor Dan Giles, AFLC missionary in Mexico, Charles Lindquist, World Mission Prayer League director in the United States, and Pastor Eugene Enderlein, former AFLC World Missions director.



See SEMINARY, page 20

asked a third time and I responded that I believed so, but only God knew for sure. He then opened up his Bible to I John 5:12-13: "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life."

He simply presented God's Word to me and told me that I could know. God used that day to awaken me to the power and surety of His promise. I now know that I have salvation in Christ and that God's Word is power-

ful unto all who receive it.

After college I worked as an electrical engineer for almost 10 years, first in Mississippi and then in southern Illinois, before raising hogs full-time with my brothers for about three years. At that time I entered seminary at AFLTS.

I had a wonderful seminary experience. The seminary not only trains us to be proficient in the Word, but also to rely on it. *Sola Scriptura* still lives. The emphasis on breaking Scripture down into law and gospel is also an essential part of the experience. I also was greatly impressed by the humble and passionate spirits of the staff. I pray that I am as influ-

Drive continues for AFLBS piano

Committee asks for support

By the time you read this, the upright piano at the front of the AFLC schools chapel will be gone. Grace Free Lutheran, which owns the piano, has relocated to a new building in Maple Grove, Minn., and has taken both the chapel and cafeteria pianos.

We hope to replace both pianos with one for the chapel. Last year, AFLBS students gave \$1,385 to start a fund for a new piano. With matching funds from Thrivent and other gifts, the fund now totals nearly \$4,000.

Music has always been a very important part of our campus ministry. A quality piano will help our young musicians develop their musical skills. The piano will be a vital instrument for ministry through future concerts, recitals, special music and congregational singing.

Are you interested in helping the Bible school and seminary with this purchase? Individual gifts and legacies both large and small will help make it possible.

If you can help, please send your gift to: Piano Fund, Association Free Lutheran Bible School, 3120 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441

Check the AFLBS Web site (www.aflbs.org) for more information.

Sincerely,
Piano Search Committee

enced as I am impressed. I was also greatly blessed to fellowship with the other seminarians, especially my brother Rich Carr and his family, during this time.

Eight days after driving back to Metropolis last May, I married my wonderful wife, Tonia Gray. We have a 4-year-old son named Noah, whose father was killed in a tree-cutting accident in 2000. Last July he became my legal son through adoption. We are also expecting a baby in July. I am blessed with a beautiful family. God is good.

Two remaining graduates will be featured in the next issue.



Pastor John Chandler, Amarillo, Texas, was recently elected national chaplain of the US Seagoing Marine Association. He served in the Marines from 1953-'56. The USSMA is a veteran's organization whose membership consists of Marine veterans who have served on Navy ships.

Pastor Paul Nash, director of AFLC Home Missions, installed **Pastor James Gerdeen** on Jan. 19 as pastor at Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Mo. Gerdeen recently retired as chair of the mechanical engineering department at the University of Colorado, Denver.

Pastor David Nelson has accepted a call to serve Christian Free Lutheran, Wheatland, Iowa. David and his wife, Sarah, and family recently returned from Portugal, where they served as missionaries with the AFLC.

Eldor Sorkness, a pioneer AFLC lay leader, recently died. His funeral was Jan. 22 at Faith Lutheran Church

of Running Valley, Colfax, Wis.

Pastor Elden Nelson, AFLC vice president, began serving a half-time position as assistant to the president on Jan. 27. Nelson has accepted the position as a temporary, two-month job.

Pastor Kenneth Wilsdon, Calgary, Alberta, has resigned as pastor of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran.

Pastor Don Richman, Bloomington, Minn., was one of three special guests Jan. 21 on "Focus on the Family" radio broadcast with Dr. James Dobson. The panel of guests discussed how many churches today are forsaking pro-life values during a segment titled "Abortion and the Church." Richman, director of East European Missions Network, is a former member of Lutherans For Life board of directors and is still active as an international representative.

Licensed pastor James Christianson, Bemidji, Minn., accepted a call to serve Bethany Lutheran,

Abercrombie, N.D., and United Free Lutheran, McLeod, N.D. He will begin his ministry there on June 1. He has served the Shevlin, Minn., parish (Lanstad, Sell Lake and Trinity) for two years.

AFLC World Mission Director

Pastor Del Palmer and President

Pastor Robert Lee visited mission work in India Jan. 25-Feb. 3. They were hosted by St. Paul's Lutheran School in Chirala, with Pastor and Mrs. D. Luther Sastry. They were also the guests of Dr. S. Anand Kumar in southern Andhra Pradesh.

Pastor Glenn Larsen, Larimore, N.D., received the Lamb Award medallion and citation from the Boy Scout Troop 25. Larsen received the award Feb. 9, during a worship service at Living Faith Free Lutheran, Larimore.

Dr. Francis Monseth, AFLC seminary dean, returned on Feb. 5 from two weeks of teaching and preaching in Estonia and Russia.

January memorials

Department given to

... in memory of

General fund

Ray Jacobson *Victor Berg*

AFLBS

Victor Berg, Ray Jacobson, Sharon Groven, Lula Ness, Edgar Lane

AFLTS

Victor Berg, Erling Emerson, Edgar Lane, Lula Ness

World Missions

Victor Berg, Elsie Skaar, Anna Melby, Alfred Mohagen, Alver Christopherson, Eldor Sorkness

Home Missions

Victor Berg, Sivert Harstad

Vision 2004

Thea Erickson, Orville Qualley, Winnie Schatzke, Helen Mogren, Lula Ness, Leslie Waddle, Gerald Stenbak, Arnold & Evenelle Evavold, Tonnes Pollestad Sr.

MTI

Ray Jacobson

... in honor of

World Missions

Inez Wee, John & Katrina (O'Neil) Zak

WMF January memorials

Dorothy Wik, Webster, S.D.

Harriet Dalager, Webster

Mabel Buhler, Webster

Lydia McCarlson, Webster

Leslie Waddle, Webster

Gerald Stenbak, Tioga, N.D.

Esther Lien, Conway, N.D.

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

AFLC Benevolences (1 month) – January 1 - January 31, 2003

FUND	TOTAL Subsidy	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% TOTAL
General Fund	\$305,568.00	\$24,556.83	\$24,556.83	8
Youth Ministries . . .	48,154.00	7,962.88	7,962.88	17
Parish Education . . .	90,907.00	4,404.19	4,404.19	5
Seminary	150,070.00	9,818.99	9,818.99	7
Bible School	263,356.00	12,699.82	12,699.82	5
Home Missions.	305,087.00	16,047.80	16,047.80	5
Church Extension . . .	28,945.00	6,369.25	6,369.25	22
World Missions.	247,082.00	19,531.38	19,531.38	8
Personal Support . . .	301,156.00	36,631.89	36,631.89	12
TOTALS	\$1,740,325.00	\$138,023.03	\$138,023.03	8
TOTALS 2002	\$1,521,284.00	\$148,783.02	\$148,783.02	10
Goal 8%				

The Evangelism Department received \$7,965.73 in January.

EDITORIAL It's a classic

I had a literature professor who believed a certain popular author would not stand up to the tests of time. "In 40 years nobody will be reading him," was the claim.

Some writers, teachers and thinkers present ideas that capture people's imaginations. They gather a large audience and garner much praise and acclaim. But with some of them, after a few years go by, nobody reads

their work or pays much attention to their ideas. They were popular but merely trendy.

Following trends is something that happens in culture and can happen in the church. An idea arises that everyone is talking about. An author emerges that everyone is reading. A program comes upon the scene that every congregation is trying. It is tempting to follow the trends.

We must be careful and not arrogantly act like we already know it all. We should always be humble learners. The new writer may have something to say. The new idea may have some merit. We should always strive to grow.

At the same time, however, we recognize that some things are classics. They have stood the test of time. Those ideas and concepts that have been tried and proven deserve special consideration.

One of the concepts that have stood the test of time is the vision of free and living Lutheran congregations put forth by Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal in the 1800s. I was reminded of how this vision is not trendy, but is applicable to different times and cultures during a recent trip to Brazil.

At the end of January I had the opportunity to attend the 37th Annual Conference of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations of Brazil. Future issues of this magazine will include more detailed reports on the conference and trip. During the two weeks Loiell Dyrud and I were in Brazil we were able to visit various AFLC congregations and individuals there. It was a chance to see free and living congregations functioning and thriving in another land.

We spoke at the conference and in the congregations on the background of the free Lutheran movement and the vision that inspired it, on the role of lay people in a congregation, on the nature of a congregation, and the role of a pastor as a servant. It was encouraging during



Craig Johnson
Editor

those times and during visits with individuals to see the interest that exists in these matters.

They have difficulty pronouncing the name Sverdrup. It is not likely any of them will ever read his original works in Norwegian. Yet the dream of free and living congregations that captured Sverdrup's thinking has enthused a number of people in Brazil as well.

The United States that Sverdrup came to in 1874 was a mission field. He was frustrated over the state of the church in Norway. He saw a new opportunity developing to be involved in the growth of "a free church in a free land." He saw this vision of a congregation directing its own affairs, subject to the authority of the Word and the Spirit of God, and acknowledging no other ecclesiastical authority or government above itself (Fundamental Principle 5) as being the way to do mission work. He saw the planting of free congregations as being fundamental to spreading the good news of Jesus.

Our first Fundamental Principle states, "According to the Word of God, the congregation is the right form of the Kingdom of God on earth." It does not state that only congregations in the United States are the right form. To the contrary, congregations in other lands that have been planted by God and operate under the Word and Spirit of God are to be respected as well. They are to operate their affairs with similar freedom. We

have similar confidence that God will direct them.

It's working in Brazil. Congregations are growing in freedom. They have challenges like we do in the U.S. That is to be expected. Free and living congregations are, in some ways, always a work in progress. But it was encouraging to visit with individuals who have gotten a taste of what free congregations are about and want to see that concept grow in their land.

Trends come along that seem to be the way to run a church. Having the local congregation dominated by a strong leader at the local or denominational level may seem like the way to go. Restricting the congregation's freedom out of fear of what kind of foolishness they may get into may seem appropriate. Ordering congregations and lay people around may appear to be effective in other groups. May we not be people who merely follow trends that seem to work.

Building up free and living congregations isn't just trendy. It is a classic vision that is applicable here and now. It is a concept for which we give thanks and a dream that continues to inspire.

It was a chance to see free and living congregations functioning and thriving in another land.

SOMETHING TO SHARE

Keep praying and sharing

Iwould like to share with you about a friend and classmate of mine, Jim, who was diagnosed with cancer. There was a battle going on, not only for his physical life but also for his spiritual life.

After a few calls I found out Jim was in the hospital. I visited him that afternoon, and things were not good. Jim was in intensive care with blood clots on his lungs, and the doctors were unable to treat the cancer.

Leaving the hospital, I've never felt like I was up against a bigger wall. I remember thinking that it was in the Lord's hands. At home I got on my computer and sent a message to the AFLC asking members to pray.

The next day Jim's condition was worse. The doctors were talking about taking him off life support. That night his family and I stood around Jim's bed and read from the Scriptures. His mom said she had prayed for her son all of his life. She was worried about his spiritual condition. They decided not to remove his life support at that time because it was his daughter's birthday in a few days.

The next Monday the doctor came in and told us that things were really out of their hands; there was nothing else they could do. The nurse told me maybe Jim would live 15 minutes. They asked the family to leave the room so they could start taking him off life support.

Jim was gaining consciousness

because they were trying to bring him around. I remember standing there. The presence of the Lord filled the room. I asked them to stop until we prayed. The doctor and nurses backed away from him. I grabbed him by the hand and we prayed to the Almighty God that His hand be on Jim, knowing that we had no control over what was going to happen. I left the room to be with the family.

In a little while the doctor came out and said Jim was breathing on his own. That night I was able to talk with Jim. We read the Scriptures, had prayer and he prayed the Lord's Prayer that night. I asked Jim if he wanted to pray to ask God to forgive him of his sins and ask Him into his life. Being unable to speak, I asked him to just squeeze my hand.

Jim continued to improve. But it seemed like the better he got the more he became the old Jim. That bothered me. One night I was ready to go home when Jim said, "When I was in intensive care, I don't remember anything that happened there."

"Jim," I said, "you don't remember praying a prayer and asking Jesus to forgive your sins and squeezing my hand each time?"

"No, I don't, Larry," he said with tears running down his cheeks.

"Jim, would you like to ask Jesus to come into your life and forgive your sins right now? Do you believe He died and rose again? Would you like to pray a prayer like that?"

"Yes, I would," he said.

II Corinthians 6:2, "For He says, at an acceptable time I have listened to you and on a day of salvation I have helped you. See, now is the acceptable time, see, now is the day of salvation."

When I visited Jim the next day, he said, "Do you know what the doctor told me today? He told me I have about 30 days to live. What do you think of that?"

"How many days do I have?" I asked. Jim just laughed. I told him that now if he died he was going to heaven, not a bad option. He agreed.

Jim improved enough so he could go home at one point, but just for a couple of days. When I went to the hospital to visit him after that, things had changed again for the worse. He and I talked about the fact that Jesus Christ had spared his life so that he could come to know Him. I saw a guy who was afraid to go to sleep, not knowing if he would wake up. But after making a commitment to Christ, I saw a man who was no longer afraid of death.

Maybe you were one of those who prayed for Jim through this time. I would like to thank you. I believe Jim's life was also spared because of a faithful mom who prayed for her son all of his life. Keep praying and sharing.

— Larry Behne
Christian Free Lutheran
Wheatland, Iowa