

W *The Lutheran* WITNESS

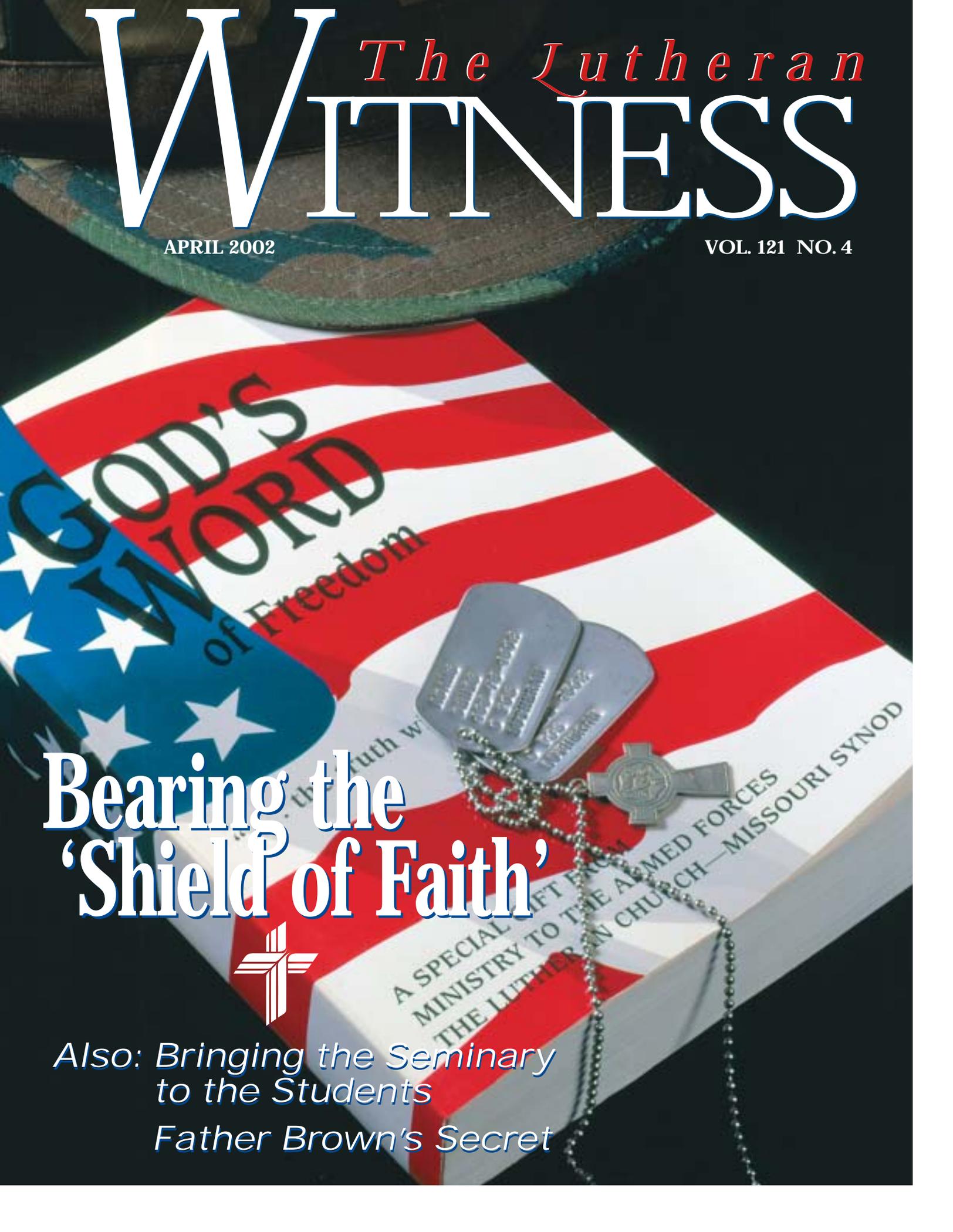
APRIL 2002

VOL. 121 NO. 4

Bearing the 'Shield of Faith'



*Also: Bringing the Seminary
to the Students
Father Brown's Secret*





The Lutheran WITNESS

A MAGAZINE FOR THE LAYPEOPLE OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

APRIL 2002

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Fantasyland

Thank God someone has had the insight to address the issue of Harry Potter!

*Kare Winters
Lafayette, Ind.*

"GOOD FANTASY/BAD FANTASY" (FEB. '02) by Gene Edward Veith has provoked much thought. I agree with Dr. Veith that it is important to distinguish between good and bad fantasy, but I do not wish to rule out the Harry Potter series. As a parent, I plan to discuss the difference between merely enjoying a well-written story and reading one with the intent of modeling a positive Christian lifestyle. I think that with positive family discussion of the story in a Christian context, it is possible to enjoy well-told fantasies.

*Alice G. Barrett Simmons
Hammond, Ind.*

THE AUTHOR APPEARS TO LIKE TOLKIEN and Lewis because they were Christians and labels their works "good fantasy" because it is possible to understand them as Christian allegories. The author of the Harry Potter series, on the other hand, is simply stigmatized as "a divorced single mother on welfare." Her books and the movie are assessed as "bad fantasy" because they are lacking in Christian allegory and because Harry Potter is in a school of witches. This boils down to a fallacious truism: "Good fantasy" is what I like; "bad fantasy" is what I don't like.

"Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar," as Freud said, and sometimes a children's story is just a children's story. It is a poor witness for Lutherans to promote the "Harry Potter is of the devil" hysteria.

*Rev. Josepha Lecke
Mount Vernon, Ill.*

NEVER DO I REMEMBER THIS KIND OF controversy over other tales of witches, fantasy and good versus evil. There are good and bad witches

in "The Wizard of Oz" and numerous other tales; characters flying around in "Bedknobs and Broomsticks" and "Mary Poppins"; and many of the elements depicted in Harry Potter in "Alice in Wonderland." In "Hansel and Gretel," a witch wants to roast a boy in an oven! Where are all the critics of these fantasies?

The controversy over Harry Potter continues because Harry Potter is *new*. When years have passed, Harry Potter will be viewed identically to all the fantasies of years past.

*Marilin E. Ginnow
Jackson, Mich.*

I THINK THERE IS ENOUGH GOOD IN Harry Potter to make it redeemable. I feel we do a disservice to our children and to ourselves when we are unwilling to examine what the non-Christian audience is reading. What a marvelous exercise it would be for parents and those in authority to teach about the blurred lines in "Harry Potter" instead of calling it unclean and shoving it to the side. For the older reader, a comparison between "The Lord of the Rings" and Harry Potter would prove most instructive.

*Beth Berner
Seattle, Wash.*

THE DEVIL IS AFTER OUR CHILDREN'S souls, and the Harry Potter books are opening the door. Right now, its fun and entertaining, but there are high-school students in predominately Christian communities who are already practicing the Wiccan religion. The next stop is our state universities, where the Wiccan religion is set up and classes on witchcraft are offered. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against

principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

*Gertrude Bredehoff
York, Neb.*

WHILE WE AGREE THAT CHRISTIANS should be concerned about witchcraft books aimed at teenagers, the Harry Potter series doesn't fit that criteria. Our sons, aged 9 and 11, have read the entire series and have seen the movie, and they have yet to show any signs of trying to turn us into newts. And the oldest is still keeping up with his catechism lessons. Fans of Harry Potter are no more likely to turn to witchcraft than those who watch "Star Wars" are of turning to the "dark side."

*Robin and Kelly Krause
Knob Noster, Mo.*

BOOKS BY THE MASTERS, TOLKIEN AND Lewis, should be accessibly placed in one's home. Exposure to their calibre of "magic" is "fantastically" healthy for any reader!

*Cynthia Sue Martell
Peterborough, N.H.*

THE ARTICLE ON FANTASY HELPED ME recall an interesting comment on what is or is not reality. When "Star Wars: The Phantom Menace" was about to be released, George Lucas was asked on TV to respond to criticism for having a computer-generated character, Jar-Jar Binks, as a main character. "Isn't it deceptive to the audience," the interviewer asked, "to have a fake character play such a major role?" There was a long pause as Lucas stared incredulously at the host, and then said, "Don't you understand? It's *all* fake!"

The comment by Lucas speaks to a major problem in teaching our children about truth and fiction, reality and fantasy. Most of what we view on television and film is fiction. It may mimic reality in some of its parts, but we all need to realize what

Lucas was saying: None of it should be taken as a model of reality or as a guide for how we are to live our lives.

*Rev. Ronald E. Nelson
St. Louis, Mo.*

Animals in heaven?

RE. REV. DAVID BOYD'S "BUT WHAT ABOUT Reepicheep?" (Feb. '02):

As a veterinarian, I am presented occasionally with the question of what happens to pets after they die. I'm not sure of Pastor Boyd's ultimate conclusion—he writes that "Reepicheep *may* not be standing with us around the throne of the Lamb" and that "it would not disappoint me if he was"—but many in our church are quite convinced that animals will not be in heaven.

Where in the Bible is it stated that animals will not be in heaven? I don't know for sure, since the Bible seems to be silent on this subject. But I am sure that whatever the Lord has in store for us will be more joyous than we can imagine. Any pet lover would tell you that a reunion with a beloved four-legged friend, along with our human family and friends, would be one of the greatest joys imaginable!

*Dr. Rodney K. Yetter
Havana, Ill.*

PASTOR BOYD WROTE, "JESUS SHED HIS blood for us humans—and *only* for us." If the sin of Adam brought death and condemnation to all creation, then did not the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus bring life and salvation to all creation? Is not the latter greater than the former? The apostle wrote, "The creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). In Jesus' miracles also, He not only restores humanity from disease to health and death to life, but also restores the creation from lack of sustenance to abundance and from storms to still seas. Jesus is the Savior and King of all creation; to suggest otherwise trivializes the salvific work of the divine Jesus.

*Dr. Thomas Von Hagel
River Forest, Ill.*

BEARING THE 'SHIELD OF FAITH'

*As the men and women of our
Armed Forces face new dangers,
LCMS chaplains stand with them.*

by Robin R. Mueller

At Ground Zero, Manhattan

Lt. Cmdr. Gregory Todd, a Navy chaplain, usually serves as sole chaplain for Coast Guard Activities in New York City, working closely with the fire and police departments and the Port Authority Police Department. He and other staff hurried into Manhattan after the terrorist attacks, knowing that Coast Guard members and rescue workers would need support.

When many firefighters asked Todd to pray for them, he helped to call up a special Chaplain Emergency Response Team of 30 additional chaplains. For 45 days, teams rotated throughout the city. They encouraged and prayed with rescue workers and Coast Guard members working long, stressful hours at Ground Zero, the Port of New York, the emergency morgue, fire-fighting staging areas and #1 Police Plaza. They also ministered to grieving families at the family center and on ferries bringing families to Ground Zero.

Todd says the experience taught him to “treasure people and hold time with the ones you love as



Chaplain Lt. Col. Eric Erkkinen is now serving in the Middle East as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. This photo, from his tour in Bosnia in 1998 and 1999, was taken in Sarajevo. After Sept. 11, Erkkinen was called to provide support for the search and recovery operations at the Pentagon.

precious. I find myself getting out of the office more and spending time with people, trying to represent God to them and reflect His love.”

On the National Day of Mourning, Sept. 14, 2001, Todd prayed over an intercom at the Coast Guard Command Center, “Lord, give us the eyes of faith to see You working. Even through the valley of the shadow of death, even through the horrible evil humanity inflicts on itself, You are with us. ... Help us to know that You have not left us but are holding us close to You and weeping with us.”

“The Sunday following the attack, I had a special service in chapel with prayers and readings printed in the bulletin,” Todd says. “The next week I checked on my admiral to see how he was holding up under all the stress. He pulled the bulletin out of his portfolio and told me he’s referred to it several times. People are listening to us and watching us, and Christ is touching them—even when we don’t realize it.”

In early September 2001, Rev. Frank Ciampa, pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., applied to be moved from the Army Reserve to active duty.

While his paperwork was being processed, his unit was called to lower Manhattan after the terrorist attack. He served with security at the World Trade Center site for 10 days, holding informal Bible studies and worship services, trying to lift the morale of workers and soldiers.

Ciampa saw one woman pulled from the wreckage, covered with dust, but alive. He also saw firemen bring out bodies in body bags, and said there was “sadness in the air, mixed with disbelief and anger.” He said the odors, dust and magnitude of the destruction were impossible to describe.

At the Pentagon

Meanwhile, at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., Chaplain Col. Larry W. Myers, a career Air Force reservist and associate pastor of Elm Grove Evangelical Lutheran Church, Elm Grove, Wis., was attending an annual conference. Two sides over from the crash site, participants didn’t hear or feel the impact and didn’t know about the attack “until word slowly reached us.”

Within a half-hour, about 40 chaplains from all military branches were on hand. “Chaplains are a visible presence and reminder of God Almighty,” he says. “Many commanders will not even consider entering into battle without their chaplain.”

Myers, who retired last month after 30 years of service, provided medical and spiritual care for the injured and the rescuers. He also tried to bring out survivors until

smoke prevented them from entering the building. Myers comforted children who had been evacuated from the Pentagon Child Care Center.



Chaplain Gregory Todd

For more than 50 days, beginning that night,

“People are listening to us and watching us, and Christ is touching them—even when we don’t realize it.”

Myers, who held a Top Secret security clearance, helped to staff the chaplain desk of the Air Force command center (called the

Crisis Action Team or CAT) in the basement of the Pentagon. CAT mobilized Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard personnel and coordinated Air Force operations worldwide. Myers ensured that Air Force chaplains and chaplain assistants were mobilized and deployed with them.

Myers praised “the quality and integrity” of the CAT personnel. “They allow their faith to inform their thinking and decisions, even in matters of military strategy and operations,” he says.

Chaplain Lt. Col. Eric Erkkinen was called up from Fort Belvoir, Va., to the Pentagon for search and recovery operations. The Army Chief of Chaplains Office asked Erkkinen to provide support as a husband was notified of his wife’s death.

“Though she had been missing and he feared the worst, the official notice was very difficult for him,” Erkkinen recounts. “She had died on her birthday and he had baked a chocolate cake for her. It sat on the dining room table [for 10 days], uneaten since Sept. 11th. I consoled

him and prayed with this loving husband, a retired marine sergeant. I attended the funeral two weeks later.”

Months later, serving in the Middle East as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, Erkkinen is amazed that “with all my human frailty and flaws and weaknesses, God seems to put me in places and situations where my strengths can be used.” He has seen firsthand many quiet heroes and “the great capacity our nation’s people have for compassion and for selfless service.”



Chaplain Lt. Cmdr. Ted Crandall is at far left on the platform during a memorial on Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean, where he witnessed bombers taking off in the first American counterstrike against terrorism. “It was left for me only to continue preaching the Good News.”

Homeland Security

Chaplain Maj. Douglas Fleischfresser, an Army National Guard chaplain, was called up with his Military Police battalion for Homeland Security Defense. For five months, he provided religious services for Military



Coast Guard Chaplains rotated in and out of Ground Zero, New York City, providing prayer, religious services, or at times just a smile or a listening ear. "We have had chaplains walking at Ground Zero and firefighters would just run up and give them a big hug, and say, 'We are really glad you are here,'" said Coast Guard Activities New York Chaplain Gregory Todd, on the right.

Police at 11 Illinois airports and three military posts. "It is one of the most rewarding experiences I've had," says Fleischfresser. "To a chaplain, every day is Sunday. Almost every day, I have worship services for the 288 soldiers on duty at our airports."

Soldiers eagerly asked for devotions and "wanted to know where God was in all this destruction,"

Fleischfresser says. "So my first round of devotions focused on how God works and the power of His love to change hearts and minds." These young adults "are desperately wanting answers to unknowns in their life. I will go anywhere, at any time, to provide the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a soldier in need."

Fleischfresser treasures the times when soldiers invite him to see a movie, eat pizza or meet their families, which also opens up witnessing opportunities. "I never get tired of soldiers asking for a prayer or a blessing, for a word of hope or encouragement from Scriptures," he says. "There is an absolute high when you get ready to leave and they ask when you are coming back again. What a joy!"

Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Warnke, a command chaplain on the USS Peleliu, spent more than six months in the Arabian Sea, where troops prepared to enter Afghanistan.

"There is a hunger here for the Word of God and we are creating new worship opportunities every week. Last night was our first women's Bible study, with four people in attendance. Never thought that I would see that when I joined the Navy—a women's Bible study on a ship in the middle of a war zone."

Navy Chaplain Lt. Mike Reckling, on the USS Enterprise, says the captain interrupted a Sunday-evening worship service in October, informing everyone "that we were about to strike back at the terrorists. The captain noted that almost exactly 60 years before, the U.S. had been attacked by a foreign enemy and that another ship named 'Enterprise' was on its way home. That ship played an important part in our nation's response, just as we were about to do now. After his message, the service continued with prayers and the rest of the sermon."

U.S. bombers took off and resupplied at Diego Garcia, an island in the Indian Ocean. Chaplain Lt. Cmdr. Ted Crandall

served there a year, until November 2001, ministering to Air Force members and Royal British Marines.

He witnessed the daily build-up of dozens of planes. "I will never forget the afternoon my next-door neighbor and I watched from our patio as wave after wave of B-52 bombers began taking off," he recounts. "We feared we were witnessing the start of World War Three. ... Ironically, it wasn't until CNN reported that the bomb-

ing of Afghanistan had begun that we knew we had been eyewitnesses of the first sortie of the War on Terrorism.”

“The terrorist attacks displayed the harsh reality of the Law better than I or anyone could ever preach,” he says. “It was left for me only to continue preaching the Good News—first to myself—that we need not fear our ultimate, inescapable death, but we can hold our heads high, knowing our Redeemer is very near.”

Crandall said he also spent time “defusing anti-Muslim sentiment, helping distinguish between terrorists and Muslims.”

Crandall’s supervisory chaplain, a Roman Catholic priest, had been a “boat person” fleeing North Vietnam years earlier. Crandall offered him counsel, realizing his friend was, to some extent, reliving the terror and uncertainty he once had escaped.

About his ministry,

Crandall says, “I love most seeing the light come on in the eyes of a young sailor or Marine when he realizes for the first time that God loves him anyway. So many people, especially those who grew up in and around church, think Christianity is about getting God to like us, when He already loves us.”



Army Chaplain Eric Erkkinen and his chaplain's assistants were getting ready to go to Bosnia



About this photo, Chaplain Mark Reschke wrote: “While in the field [in the Republic of Kenya] we conducted our usual field services. The 1st Sgt. brought a Kenyan who wanted to meet the chaplain. We invited him to worship. The next day I jumped in the back of a [truck] to meet the Kenyans. The word was passed that we would be holding a Bible study and that all were welcome to come. Three Marines and six Kenyans showed up. Christians who have a fire in the belly for the Lord! We had a delightful time together. We brought about 10 Bibles and 15 New Testaments and again as many pamphlets on the Gospel of John. We distributed them to whoever wanted them. I asked them if they would permit me to take their picture; they said yes.”

Top photo courtesy Eric Erkkinen
Bottom photo courtesy of Mark Reschke

EQUIP OUR TROOPS WITH ‘THE SHIELD OF FAITH’

Pray for our chaplains’ Christian witness and for their work in the United States and around the world.

Participate in Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF) Sunday in your church on May 26, Trinity Sunday and Memorial Day Weekend. Contact MAF at the LCMS International Center, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; 314/965-9000; e-mail: lcmschaps@lcms.org, or visit www.lcmsworldmission.org/armedforces.

Prayerfully consider supporting these ministries on Armed Forces Sunday and regularly with your gifts.

Send the MAF the name of any active-duty member of your congregation. The MAF office will alert chaplains to their needs. For 50 years, MAF also has provided “Ministry by Mail” to LCMS Armed Forces members—sending them a list of locations of Lutheran chaplains or military contact pastors, including Lutheran worship and communion services; *The Lutheran Witness* with an Armed Forces insert; *Portals of Prayer* and other spiritual resources, such as “God’s Word of Encouragement,”

a pocket-sized booklet containing Scripture and prayers, and “In His Service,” written for women in the Armed Forces by a former military wife, and distributed by the LWML.

— R.R.M.

Ministry to the Armed Forces

“We work under the auspices of the Board of Mission Services and that’s where we should be,” declares retired Army Chaplain Rodger R. Venzke, now director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces. “The military is a culture unto itself—we wear specific clothing, speak a different language, and have our own mores and customs.”

Of the 1.4 million people on active duty, about 43,000 are Lutherans. New recruits can state their religious preference—and 25 percent declare none. “It’s a fantastic mission field, where you can reach out to young people and families during their formative years, when they are searching for meaning under trying conditions,” Venzke declares.

More than 80 LCMS military chaplains are serving on active duty, while another 125 serve with Reserve or National Guard units—usually also serving as full-time parish pastors. Another 25 LCMS pastors minister to veterans in hospitals and centers, and 16 serve as Civil Air Patrol chaplains.

“It’s intensive one-on-one ministry with a sailor on a ship, a soldier in the field or an airman on the flight line,” declares Venzke. “If you are flexible and adventurous, chaplaincy is the ministry for you. All chaplains eat, sleep and live with

their peers. If a troop is called out to run six miles in the morning, they run too.

“Chaplains are a visible presence and reminder of God Almighty. Many commanders will not even consider entering into battle without their chaplain.”

They learn how to parachute, fly planes, do drills and crawl on a cable between two ships. They do everything their military peers do.”

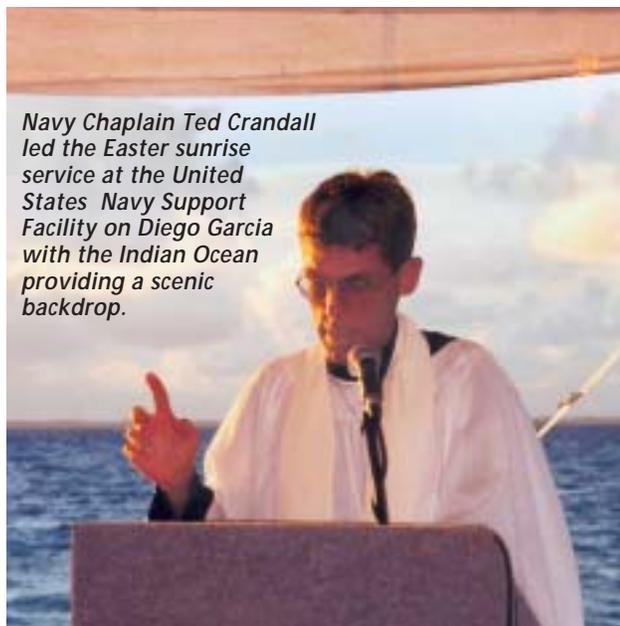
Navy Chaplain Todd explains how these daily activities foster evangelism: “I love interacting with people who are not religious and who would not choose to talk with a minister normally. But since we work together, they have to get to know me and see I’m a normal guy, but with a different center to my life. That then gives me the opportunity to share Christ with them.”



Chaplain Eric Erkkinen, on the right leading worship, was the deputy division chaplain, 1st Cavalry Division, from June 1997 until October 1999. He served in Bosnia for seven months with the 1st Cavalry Division.



Chaplain Larry Myers



Navy Chaplain Ted Crandall led the Easter sunrise service at the United States Navy Support Facility on Diego Garcia with the Indian Ocean providing a scenic backdrop.



Robin R. Mueller, a former features editor for The Lutheran Witness, lives in House Springs, Mo. She is a free-lance writer for church-related and corporate clients.

Missions-ALMA relationship benefits both groups

The relationship between LCMS World Mission and the growing mission-society movement, now seven years old, is mutually beneficial, according to Rev. B. Steve Hughey, director for mission partnership and involvement with LCMS World Mission.

Hughey works as a liaison between the

Synod's mission board and nearly 60 U.S. mission societies that have been started by Missouri Synod members who wanted to become more personally involved in mission work. Instead of sending their money to someone else to do mission work for them, he says, they want to take responsibility for the

work themselves.

The independent mission societies, which relate to one another and to LCMS World Mission as the Association of Lutheran Mission Agencies, or ALMA, reach out to a variety of people and specialty groups.

In their mutually beneficial partnership, LCMS World Mission offers

training in such things as strategic planning, and provides networking opportunities, and the societies offer their human and financial resources, according to Hughey.

For information on starting a mission society or joining ALMA, contact Hughey at (800) 433-3954, Ext. 1317; *steve.hughey@lcms.org*.

Kieschnick starts video-Web talks

Synod President Gerald Kieschnick talks about trips he took recently to Europe, New York and Washington, D.C., in a 20-minute recorded video presentation that can be accessed from the Internet.

Kieschnick says that he plans to deliver other recorded video-on-demand—as well as live—presentations, to update members on Synod news and events.

For the video, go to either of these addresses on the LCMS Web site: www.lcms.org/president on the "President's Page," or at www.lcms.org (then click on "What's New").

To see and hear the president's video presentation via a computer, the user must have a PC running Explorer 5.0 and Windows Media Player 6.4 or higher. The service cannot be accessed using Netscape browser software, with Real Player software, or from an Apple

Macintosh computer.

David Strand, the Synod's director of public affairs, said that efforts are underway to make it possible for more users to access the presentations, which will be archived on the LCMS Web site.

AAL/LB proposes name: 'Thrivent'

"Thrivent Financial for Lutherans" is the proposed new name for Aid Association for Lutherans/Lutheran Brotherhood (AAL/LB).

The name change will apply to all AAL/LB operations except its affiliated companies, such as those for banking, mutual funds and variable-insurance products. Name changes for those companies will be considered later, according to AAL/LB spokespersons.

An AAL/LB news release says that the name-selection process began shortly after AAL and LB announced merger plans last June. It also says that if the 2.2 million AAL/LB members and state regulatory agencies approve the name, it could become official by as early as June.

"Thrivent is not a real word," the site says, "but was created from the word 'thrive' to imply prosperity, health and vigor, both through prudent financial planning and outreach."

Aid Association for Lutherans and Lutheran Brotherhood formally merged Jan. 1.



A faceted-glass window planned for a memorial chapel at the Pentagon is being donated by IHS Studios, a company in Fredericksburg, Texas, that also has donated windows to mission congregations in the LCMS Texas District and elsewhere. The window, measuring five feet from point to point, honors those killed in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon. More than 400 senior Army chaplains and their assistants helped assemble the window during a conference last month at Hilton Head, S.C.

Harvesters for Christ needs more outreach teams

Nine teams of Harvesters for Christ workers have been assigned so far this year to help congregations bolster their outreach efforts.

But, Rev. Al Tormoehlen, who is with the outreach-ministry office of the LCMS Board for District and Congregational Services, says that number is not enough. He also encouraged more congregations to request teams of workers.

Teams work on location for three to six weeks, and sometimes at weekend events, Tormoehlen indicated.

He listed the following activities as typical of a

Harvesters team's work for a congregation:

- helping evangelism committees set goals;
- training members to make outreach contacts;
- helping members

express their faith in a genuine way; and

- planning evangelism events which do not involve worship.

Those interested in being on a Harvesters team, and congregations interested in hosting a team may print application forms from the Harvesters Web site, at <http://dcs.lcms.org/evang/harvesters.html>, or call Tormoehlen at (314) 996-1287.



Planners pick 'Beyond Imagination' for gathering theme

"Beyond Imagination" is the theme for the next National LCMS Youth Gathering, set for July 24-28, 2004, in Orlando, Fla.

Rev. Terry Dittmer, director of LCMS Youth Ministry, which sponsors the gatherings, said the theme reflects the idea that designers at Orlando

fantasy-theme parks are known as "imagineers."

Dittmer said that the 28-member steering committee for the gathering picked the theme after studying Scripture passages that Dittmer described as "springboards" for Bible study at the gathering.

"Gathering participants will have an excellent opportunity to explore God's real Gospel truth in a postmodern world that doesn't recognize any absolute truth," Dittmer said. "God's love in Jesus Christ, His generosity, power, authority, love,

grace and mercy are beyond imagination."

Registration for the gathering starts in late fall 2003.

The last gathering, held in New Orleans last year, attracted almost 35,000 participants.



Directors of Christian education, left, answer questions from LCMS International Center staff members at a "listening post" session during the 13th annual DCE Summit in St. Louis in February. Summit participants also discussed colloquy and certification issues for the Synod's DCE program.

Dissenters fail to convince CTCR about women voting

About 30 LCMS pastors who in 1996 formally dissented from the Synod's position that Scripture does not forbid women from voting in their congregations have failed to convince the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR).

After studying the matter, the CTCR decided without dissent at its meeting last month that there is not sufficient Biblical evidence to ask the Synod to revise its

position on the matter.

The LCMS first took its stand at its 1969 convention, which was reaffirmed by the 1995 convention.

Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, executive director of the CTCR, said this is the fifth time that the commission has studied the issue and supported what it said in 1968, that nothing in Scripture forbids women from voting or from holding most congregation or Synod offices.

Photo by Joe Isenhower Jr.

WHO IS GOD?

This month's "Searching Scripture" is from Part 3 of a five-part Bible study titled "The Way of Life: A Beginning." The entire five-part study is available online at <http://www.lcms.org/theway/>.—Ed.

by Jerry M. Kosberg

Anthropology clearly describes humanity as life with an awareness of and hunger for the spiritual. From the most primitive cultures who worshipped parts of creation to today's psychics, spiritualists and channelers, humans have sought a relationship with the divine. In this study we will begin to examine answers to that age-old question: Who is God?

1. Read 1 John 4:8. According to the end of that verse, what is God?

2. Now read 1 John 4:7–16. These verses contain some very important truths. First, who are the two Divine Persons mentioned in verses 9, 10, 14, 15?

Who is the third Divine Person in verse 13?

3. According to those verses, why did God the Father send God the Son?

4. According to verse 13, who was sent to abide in us?

5. Now read Matt. 3:16–17.

Who had just come up out of the Jordan River?

Who descended like a dove? _____

Whose voice was heard from heaven? _____

6. Read Matt. 28:19. Who are the three persons who are to be mentioned in a baptism?

7. Read 1 Cor. 8:4–6. Twice the point is made about how many Gods there are. How many Gods are there? _____

8. The mystery of God is a deep one. No human ever fully understands it. Yet the Bible does teach us enough to know that God is three distinct persons, while being only one God. The word the Christian churches uses for this is "triune." It means three-in-one. Read Eph. 2:18. What is the ultimate purpose of the three persons who make up the one God?

9. Ps. 19:1 states, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork." The Bible looks at the



wonder and beauty of creation and sees God's creating hand behind it. The Bible is not a book of science but a book of faith. What is the point made in Heb. 3:4?

What is the affirmation of faith in Heb. 11:3? _____

10. Read John 16:12–15. Jesus is speaking in these verses. It is the night before he died on the cross. Who did Jesus say was going to come to the disciples after he was gone? _____

What was the Holy Spirit going to do? _____



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SPRING HAS SPRUNG — NEW LIFE IN CHRIST!

The dreary gray of winter is gone, at least for several months. Not much more, if any, snow and ice for those who live in the parts of our country where winter is more pronounced than is the case in other areas of our land.

Spring has sprung! Nature is alive with new birth. Trees are budding and flowers are blooming. Grass once again is green and in need of mowing. It's a wonderful time of the year when what has been dormant is now reemerging with signs of new life!

The season of Lent is over. The festival of Easter is past. The time of reflection on the life, suffering and death of Christ has been

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replaced by the days and weeks of celebrating His resurrection from the grave. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

As a result of His resurrection, we Christians enjoy the new life we have in Christ. What does it mean to have this new life in Christ? It means many things, most importantly these two:

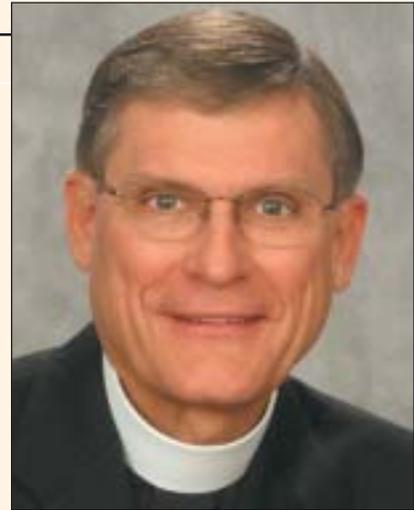
- Because of Christ's death and resurrection, our sins are forgiven.
- Since our sins are forgiven, we are given renewed hope for and assurance of the life that is to come, both here on earth and hereafter in heaven.

Most people in the world do not have that hope and assurance, because they do not know Christ. Many either have not been given the gift of faith in Christ or they have rejected Him. As a result, to use the metaphor of the seasons of the year, they are still in the dead of winter.

As a Christian who lives a new life in Christ, what can you do to influence the life of a person who has no idea what that new life is like? Here are a few suggestions:

- Think of one person with whom you have some level of relationship, whether close and personal or distant and impersonal, who does not now experience new life in Christ. This could be a family member or a dear friend or a co-worker or a waitress or a store attendant or anyone else who lives each day without Christ in his or her life.
- Pray for that person. Ask that God in His own time and according to His gracious mercy will call that person to faith by the working of His Spirit through His Word and Sacraments.
- Pray for opportunities for yourself and for others to communicate the love of Christ by word or deed to your loved one or friend or acquaintance.
- Look for such an opportunity to tell the story of Jesus and His love. Ask for God's wisdom to tell the story in a winning way in your own words.

How blessed we are to receive new life in Christ, described in the words of St. Paul: "Because of His great love for us, God, who is rich



in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7).

Paul writes more words of hope for our new life in Christ: "I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Eph. 3:16-21).

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John 3:16-17

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