

The Lutheran WITNESS

APRIL 2003

VOL. 122 NO. 4

The Epic
of *EASTER*





The Lutheran WITNESS

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

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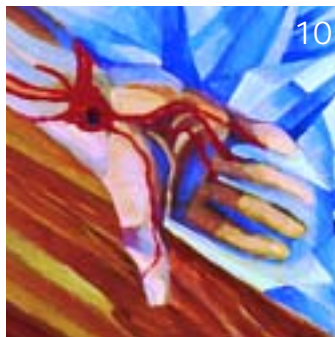
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The 'Special Report'

Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed the February issue of *The Lutheran Witness*. In these troubled times, it is good to see the church going forward.

*Myrtle Schafer
Tecumseh, Mich.*

YOUR "SPECIAL REPORT" (FEB. '03) WAS in my opinion one of the finest you have ever issued—as well as the most illuminating.

Never, to my knowledge, have you ever chronicled the Missouri Synod in such a clear, concise and lucid manner. I had often wondered just what the Synod was really all about. You have beautifully illustrated its function: what it is ... what it does ... what it accomplishes ... for the more than 6,000 congregations and 2.5 million baptized members it serves.

In a very succinct and highly readable fashion, you have brought to life that portion of the Synod's mission statement which reads, "*vigorously to make known* the love of Christ by Word and Deed within our churches, communities and the world."

*Don Zuehlsdorff
Brookfield, Wis.*

THE SPECIAL EDITION OF *THE LUTHERAN Witness*, with its "one mission" and "one message" being carried out by all of us in the LCMS as "one people," is an eye opener. It made for such interesting reading, I wanted to take in the whole volume in one sitting—and nearly did so!

But who will have the opportunity to take in all of this information? How far reaching will this information be? Only those subscribing to this magazine? Would to God that all of the many members of our Synod could receive all the knowledge this volume has to offer!

Now, since our people are better informed of our Synod's total work,

doesn't this serve to give us new momentum to return many of our missionaries to their former mission fields so that their work can continue? Let's all help to make this happen soon. And, let's make even more effort to reach the uncommitted in our own communities. We have much to do "before the night comes when no man can work" (John 9:4).

*Kathy Werning
Van Horne, Iowa*

We sent the special report to more than half a million households, better than double our usual circulation. There were some glitches—some received more than one copy, and the additional addresses were not as up to date as we had believed. We apologize for any problems and will seek to avoid similar problems should we do this again.—Ed.

FOR MANY YEARS I HAVE HELD THAT it is not agreement in all points of doctrine that norms our walking together as a Synod, but externals (such as our schools, Concordia plans, the Foundation, Church Extension Fund, etc.). Thank you for the February issue, which is a monument of proof for my theory!

*Rev. Martin E. Kiesel
Southbury, Conn.*

THANK YOU FOR THE INFORMATION IN the "Special Report." It really shows how the Synod operates all the different agencies. Such a report was long overdue, but I know there will be changes from year to year.

I'm always asked, "Where does our mission money go? What is it used for?" This report does answer that. If only our people will read it from cover to cover.

*Ernest G. Endorf
Daykin, Neb.*

For next time

PERHAPS A FUTURE SPECIAL EDITION might give more attention to another important ministry of our Synod. Although several articles in the February issue spoke of educational ministries, overall very little mention was made of the preschools, elementary schools and high schools of the Synod.

With the strong mission focus of the Synod, we should not overlook the fact that many of our congregations have a mission field quite literally in their own backyards. Our schools do not only serve the children of our congregations, but families from the surrounding communities, families who represent many nations and many faiths. The Lord Jesus gave the command to preach the Gospel to all nations. Through the ministry of our Lutheran schools, He is graciously bringing the nations to us!

*Carol Geisler
Kirkwood, Mo.*

WHILE I CERTAINLY ENJOYED THE February issue, I must call your attention to a glaring omission. You made no mention of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, which for 60 years has funded millions upon millions of dollars for the Synod's mission projects in the United States and worldwide. In addition, The league serves to enhance the spiritual life of over half our Synod's population—our women.

*Guy Mason
Cheshire, Conn.*

OF ALL THE ACRONYMS AND SMALLER groups, there is one glaring omission: LFC—Laborers For Christ. After hundreds of retirees have spent years of their “leisure” time building more than 600 churches, day-care centers, kindergartens, retreat camps and facilities in other countries, it would seem they are worthy of at least one sentence in a 44-page report.

*Byron Veath
Lady Lake, Fla.*

A pagan term

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR A delightful magazine that is informative and encouraging. Yet I was disappointed to read in the section on Human Care in the February issue that “Mother Nature” dealt Rita Ferguson a one-two punch.

How did “Mother Nature” get past the editor? Are we suddenly becoming lax in using pagan terms? It is bad enough that one of our hymnals sings praise to “Dear Mother Earth,” but now we have embraced such pagan language in our Christian publication. May the Lord give discernment to the editorial staff.

*Rev. Mark Rabe
Oroville, Calif.*

New format?

I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW HOW much I like the new format of the February issue. I hope this is an indication of the new *Lutheran Witness* to come. Well done!

*Robert J. Knight
Allen, Texas*

Although the format change for the February issue was intended for that issue only, we currently are conducting research that will help us determine what improvements we might make in the look and content of the magazine. Thanks for your input!—Ed.

THE EPIC OF EASTER

We are fully involved in a cosmic contest between very real forces of good and of evil. And, at a particular place and time, the outcome was determined.

by Dean O. Wenthe

There was a time when progress seemed natural and inevitable. The stock market flourished. Consumer confidence was high. Peace seemed within reach.

How the world has changed!

This Easter will be celebrated in a strikingly different context. War. Terrorism. Shaky markets and soaring gasoline prices. Who could have foreseen this reversal?

In the midst of such a world, an unprecedented entertainment event is ongoing. This Easter will be celebrated between the second and third of what is expected to be a record-breaking trilogy of movies: *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, *The Return of the King*.

These movies depict the work of J.R.R. Tolkien, an English novelist and a Christian. A striking feature of this epic story is that the fate of the entire world and all of its people is tied to a small ring. This ring, if possessed by the forces of evil, will result in the enslavement and destruction of

all that is good. On the other hand, if it is properly handled and disposed of, the forces of good will prevail. Remarkably, the ring is in the hands of a seemingly



A Marine stands security during a nuclear, biological and chemical drill at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. Images like this—so common in the past year—serve to remind Christians that evil plagues our fallen world and our lives, but the epic eternal battle against the source of all evil has already been won.

weak but key character, Frodo, a hobbit.

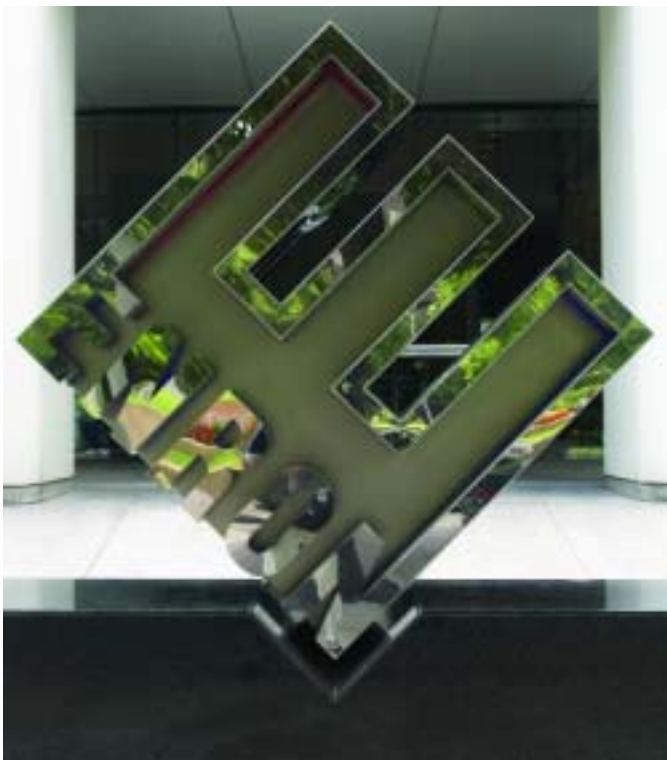
Millions of people have been caught up into the drama of this story as they anticipate *The Return of the King*. Tolkien weaves the story with great clarity. Here there is a clear contest between good and evil. The stakes are very high—the fate of the entire cosmos.

The true epic story

In such a context, Christians are called to tell a larger and more captivating story in every season, but especially in Eastertide. *This epic is, unlike the movies, a true story! Every human being is involved.* Here there are the real forces of good and of evil. Here are agents of the true God and agents of a real evil foe. And this factual account is more tragic and beautiful and compelling than any fictional world! Each of us knows this contest, for we are even now fully involved and living in it.

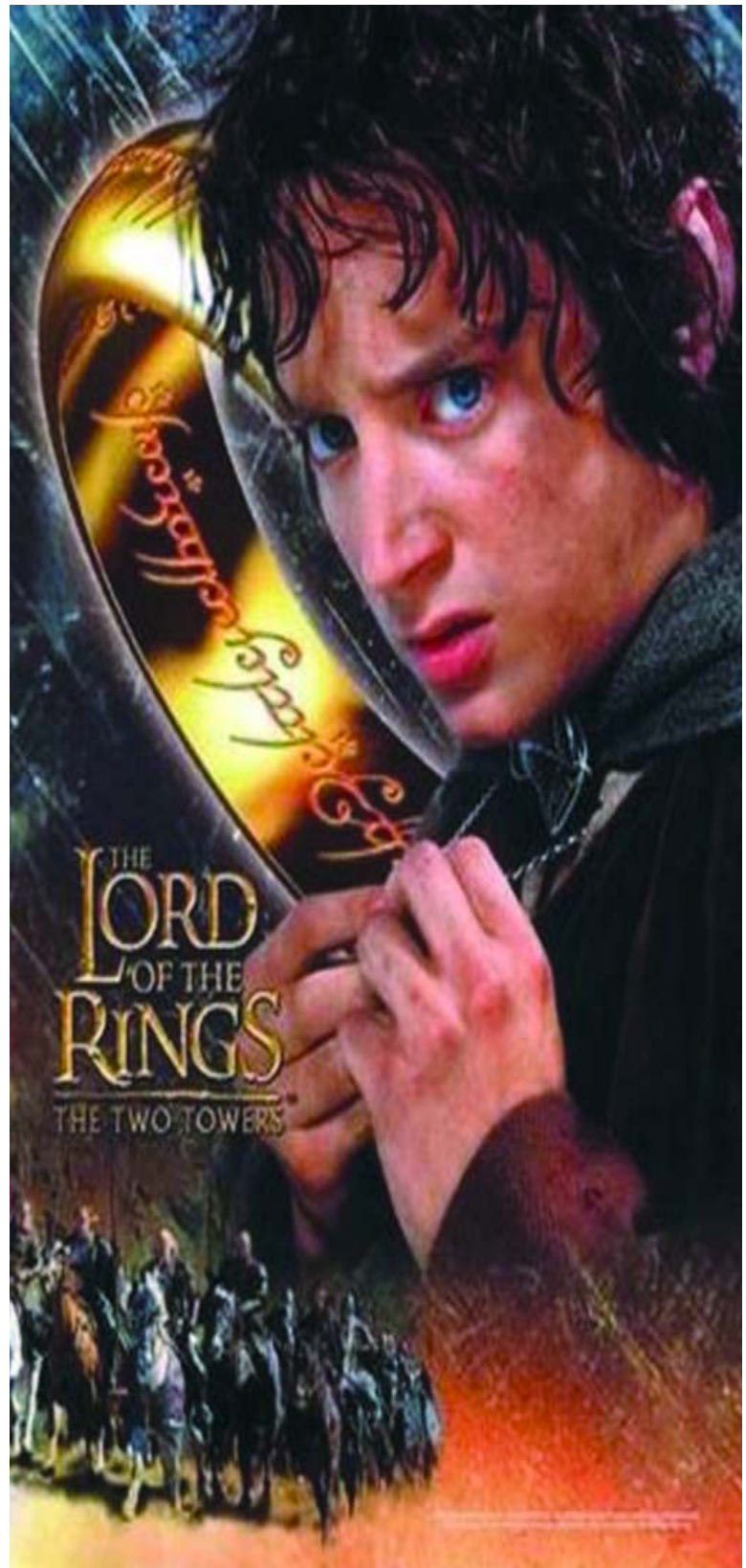
And the outcome of this contest, an outcome that profoundly touches each and every one of us, was determined *at a particular place and at a particular time*. As St. Paul so pointedly puts it:

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead,



The scandals at Enron have come to symbolize the greed and misuse of power that fostered the current psychological rock bottom in the American economy after years of hyper-growth in the 1990s.

Photo by Getty Images.
Photo by Pierre Vinet/New Line Cinema.



"The Lord of the Rings" by J.R.R. Tolkien is a massive epic fantasy that has elements of Christianity and is compatible with Christian truth with its themes of good and evil, the concept of grace and symbols that are clearly Christian.

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the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:17–22).

Victory over evil

In real space and real time, Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead. That event, so localized and dated, literally delivers the victory over evil and death for all who are in Christ. Already we participate in that victory: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17a).

This Easter season, evil is evident. Public violence and terrorism display the deadly and dark forces that consume human beings. Those same forces end the lives of the young before their first breath, challenge the sanctity of marriage and degrade human life at every turn.

'What is my purpose?'

Dr. David Barash, a professor of psychology at the University of Washington, recently opined in an academic-journal article: "At one point in Douglas Adams' hilarious *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a sperm whale plaintively wonders, 'Why am I here? What is my purpose in life?' as it plummets toward the fictional planet Magrathea. This appealing but doomed creature had just been 'called into existence' several miles above the planet's surface when a nuclear missile, directed at our hero's spaceship, was inexplicably transformed into a sperm whale via an 'Infinite Improbability Generator.' Evolution, too, is an improbability generator, although its outcomes are considerably more finite.

"Here then is a potentially dispiriting message for *Homo sapiens*: Every human being—just as every hippo, halibut, or hemlock tree—is similarly called into existence by that particular improbability generator called natural selection, after which each of us has no more inherent purpose, no more reason



With the destruction of the World Trade Center and suicide bombings (this bus, above, was bombed in Israel in March) by terrorists, defeating "evil" has been very much on our minds. But evil has been defeated. Eternal victory was won on a cross and in a grave near Jerusalem when Jesus conquered the real enemy and his weapons of mass destruction—sin and death.



Illustration © 1999 by Francisco Ordaz from *The Very First Easter* published by Concordia Publishing House. www.cph.org
Photo by Getty Images

for being, no more central significance to the cosmos, than Douglas Adams' naive and ill-fated whale, whose blubber was soon to bespatter the Magrathean landscape."

There it is in full display. Human beings, Barash asserts, have no purpose, no reason for being, no significance to the cosmos. Only darkness and death await each of us.

We have purpose

In such a context, the resurrection of Christ shines like a laser—a laser of pure and radiant light—a laser imparting true and eternal life to each of us. In the light of Christ's resurrection, we announce the sacredness and the significance of each and every human life.

Jesus had taught the disciples, "I tell you that in the same way there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents ..." (Luke 15:7a).

What a reversal! The heavens will note the repentance of one sinner with rejoicing! Here human beings count. Here they have wonderful purpose and meaning, for God has extended Himself in redeeming love through the perfect and atoning sacrifice of His Son, culminating in His glorious resurrection.

How personal and how beautiful are the Lord's words: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:1-4).

Not only has the resurrected Lord prepared a place for each of us, but He is right now watching over each of us with tender care. Our Lord assures us that "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:30).

The Epic of Easter stretches from Genesis 1 to the end of Revelation. There is no human being who stands outside of its drama and events. Here we cannot be spectators. Here we are full participants. Here our present and our future is determined. Here the devil, the world and our fallen flesh are named as the real forces that threaten us with death and destruction.

Here Jesus of Nazareth is declared and displayed as the real victor over all the forces of evil by His glorious resurrection. And, wonder of wonders, the benefits and blessings of that epic victory are available to each and every human being.

Rejoice in your Baptism, for there you were joined to Christ's death and resurrection. Rejoice in the voice of the resurrected Lord as He announces His victory



*The resurrection of Christ shines like a laser—
a laser of pure and radiant light—
a laser imparting true and eternal life to each of us.*

through His prophetic and apostolic spokesmen. Rejoice in the Holy Supper as it bestows Christ's resurrected life through the forgiveness of sins in His very Body and Blood.

Meaning. Purpose. Significance. Beauty. Life. All of these flow from the resurrection of Christ to all who rejoice in and celebrate and live out Christ's victory.

So, as you view Tolkien's *Return of the King* or read other fictional dramas, pause and rejoice in the factual account of your own worth and salvation in Christ's resurrection, the great *Epic of Easter*.



Dr. Dean O. Wenthe is president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

E-mail drive raises \$37,437 for LCMS World Mission

A letter in the January issue of *The Lutheran Witness* has sparked an e-mail campaign Synodwide that has brought in \$37,437 to date for LCMS World Mission, and the figure continues to climb.

The e-mail campaign was started by Paul Koehler of Omaha, Neb., after he read a letter from Rev. Arthur Simon of Colmar Manor, Md., in which Simon expressed

his disappointment about the financial woes of LCMS World Mission. In recent months, the Synod's mission board had to cut staff positions and bring home overseas missionaries because of a sharp drop in income.

The shortfall of \$2 to \$3 million "amounts to about one dollar per member, two cents a week," Simon wrote. The Synod has a membership

of about 2.5 million.

That sounded like a good idea to Koehler, so he launched an e-mail campaign, asking Synod members to contribute one dollar per family member to LCMS World Mission, and then to forward the e-mail to other families.

Rev. Robert Roegner, executive director of LCMS World Mission, described the campaign as "a good example of God's

people taking charge and being responsible for God's mission in the world" and said he is "absolutely overjoyed" by its outcome.

Contributions may be sent to LCMS World Mission Support, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295. Make checks payable to "LCMS World Mission" and note that the donation is for the "grass-roots effort."

Former Witness editor dies

Funeral services for Rev. Albert W. Galen, managing editor of *The Lutheran Witness* from 1970 to 1974, were held Jan. 29 at St. Luke Lutheran Church, Oviedo, Fla. Burial followed in the church cemetery.



Galen

Galen, 95, of Oviedo, died Jan. 25.

Before being named as *The Lutheran Witness'* managing editor, Galen served on the magazine for 10 years as an associate editor. He also was corresponding secretary for "The Lutheran Hour" radio broadcast from 1942 to 1944, and was an assistant professor at Concordia College, Milwaukee, from 1930-31.

Galen served at various times as pastor for several LCMS congregations.

He was preceded in

death by his wife, Martha, and by a daughter, Nathalie. Survivors include a daughter, Gloria Heller of Woodside, Calif., and a son, Dr. Gary Galen, of Troy, Ill., associate pastor of Trinity, Edwardsville, Ill.

LFC conference happens anyway after cancellation

Although this year's Laborers For Christ (LFC) project-manager's conference was canceled by LCMS World Mission because of dwindling funds, it was resurrected by the laborers themselves.

"My response to the cancellation was not one of anger, but concern, as were many others," said conference organizer Marvin Juhl. "We felt that to cancel such an important meeting would hamper the program."

LFC uses volunteers—mostly retired Lutherans—to help build and

remodel churches, schools and other LCMS structures at low cost.

A former LFC project, Faith Lutheran Church, Mount Vernon, Ill., hosted the Feb. 9-12 conference and provided free meals to participants.

Conference participants also paid their own travel and lodging, keeping costs to a minimum.

Taking charge of the conference "really shows the dedication of Laborers, that they feel strong enough about it take it upon themselves to work together and pay for it," said Curt Connolly, counselor for LFC with LCMS World Mission.

U.S. House lauds Lutheran schools

By a vote of 407 to 0, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a resolution March 4 that "supports the goals of National Lutheran Schools Week" and "congratulates Lutheran schools, students, parents, teachers,

administrators and congregations across the nation for their ongoing contributions to education."

Rep. Doug Bereuter, R-Neb., a Missouri Synod Lutheran, introduced the resolution that coincided with the 2003 National Lutheran Schools Week, March 2-8.

The resolution notes that there are 4,841 Lutheran early-childhood centers, elementary and secondary schools in the United States with 40,076 teachers. The latest statistics indicate that 2,412 of the centers and schools are operated by LCMS congregations.

For more news...

For more news—and more timely news—visit <http://reporter.lcms.org> on the Web. That's the Web site for *Reporter*, the official newspaper of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Vai Testament dedication ends 30-year project

Christians in Liberia, West Africa, and Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) celebrated in February the publication of the New Testament in the Vai language—a 30-year translation project.

LBT began work on the Vai project in 1972, and since 1980 LBT missionaries David and June Drevlow have worked full time on the translation.

David Drevlow attended a dedication ceremony Feb. 15 at a refugee camp outside of Monrovia, Liberia's capital. Rebels continue to

oppose the Liberian government, Drevlow said, and fighting has forced thousands of Liberians from their homes.

Attending the dedication were government officials, church leaders, Vai elders, women and students.

After the dedication ceremony Drevlow conducted a "Scripture-in-use" workshop with key Vai men in Monrovia, sharing ideas on how to promote the use of the New Testament among Vai readers and local churches.

"Since most Vai people are Muslims, it is significant to have the New Testament available in their language," Drevlow said.

Sems continue full tuition-aid programs

The two LCMS seminaries are continuing their gift-aid programs that cover the tuition fees for students preparing to be pastors in the Synod.

A news release from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, says that its Board of Regents decided in January to renew its full-tuition program for residential students. A release from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, says that applications for its similar program are now available on the Web.

For the application forms for the full-tuition program at Concordia,

Fort Wayne, go to www.ctsfw.edu, click on "Admission," then on "Financial Aid." For the application forms for Concordia, St. Louis, go to www.csl.edu/finacaid.htm on the Internet.

For more information about the full-tuition partnership at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, contact the Financial Aid Office at (314) 505-7202; finaid@csl.edu, or the Admissions Office at (800) 822-9545; admissions@csl.edu. At Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, contact the Office of Admissions at (800) 481-2155 for more information.

Planners set 2004 youth-gathering registration fee

The registration fee for the 2004 National LCMS Youth Gathering has been set at \$225 per participant. Registration begins in late fall.

Announcement of the fee came when 130 members of gathering planning teams met together for the first time in mid-January in Orlando, site of the July 24–28 gathering next year.

The registration fee covers all program and administrative costs, a gathering backpack and a Bible. In addition, \$10 of the fee will go to help fund new resources, training and leadership events of LCMS District and Congregational Services—Youth

Ministry, the sponsor of National LCMS Youth Gatherings since 1980.

Gretchen Jameson, gathering communications manager, said that a



During a tour of the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Mark Kiessling shows planners for the 2004 National LCMS Youth Gathering a model that includes the center's one-million-square-foot addition that will house the gathering. Kiessling is program director for the gathering.

mailing to all LCMS congregations planned for later this month will include information about housing during the gathering and how to estimate costs for food and travel.

Next year, a new event known as the Diversity Emphasis Leadership Institute (DELI) will take place just before the national gathering, replacing cross-cultural events held before previous gatherings.

Information about the gathering is on the Web at <http://dcs.lcms.org/youth>. Jameson said that the official 2004 gathering site, <http://nyg.lcms.org>, will be up by the end of this month.

A Report from Your Publishing House

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have good news to report. The past year has been marked by a revitalization of Concordia Publishing House. We streamlined operations, increased internal efficiency, and improved processes. Prior to this past year, Concordia Publishing House experienced several years of significantly increasing financial losses. By God's grace and blessing, we have experienced a strong reversal of this trend. For the first time in several years, we are back to a positive income situation. Why is this so important? So we can keep moving forward in development of new and improved resources.

We have made it one of our highest priorities in the past year to reach out to our LCMS family, seeking to understand how we may better serve you. We conducted extensive, in-depth surveys of LCMS congregations and church workers. You spoke. We listened. We implemented many of your requests and suggestions. We will continue to listen to the church carefully as we strive to serve you better.

Exciting publications are being produced by our multi-ethnic department in a wide variety of languages for people around the world. In the coming year we will be releasing the most up-to-date, single-volume commentary on the Bible in Spanish. Work continues on another first for Hispanic Christianity, a first-ever Spanish Lutheran dogmatics text. We will be publishing the first Chinese Lutheran hymnal. We are producing Luther's Small Catechism in the Ethiopian and Eritrean languages. Through partnership with LCMS World Mission, LCMS World Relief, and other mission and relief agencies, our materials are appearing in many languages around the world.

You will continue to see improvements in all of our resources. For example, the fall 2003 teaching resource

materials for our Sunday school curriculum will be noticeably easier to use, with higher quality content and teacher aids. The Sunday school teachers in our Synod will be very pleased with these enhancements. We are laying the foundation for an entirely new Sunday school curriculum in a few years. Our 2003 VBS program, *Rancho Roundup*, offers a wonderful Gospel- and Christ-centered VBS for the sake of authentic Lutheran outreach and evangelism.

We are enhancing and expanding the *LifeLight*[™] Bible study materials and other significant new studies like *The Lutheran Difference*. Our curriculum resources for church and school will also continue to be of great help. We are moving ahead on preparing various curricula for our day schools in addition to our science curriculum. We call this effort the Concordia Curriculum Collection, which will provide Lutheran faith-based texts in various subject areas. We will continue to seek ways to serve you better with all your ecclesiastical art and supply needs, and with your bulletin and offering envelope needs.

As we review the various materials that we are producing, we are always keenly mindful of the "big picture." We believe passionately in the continuing, powerful validity of the Reformation theology of Luther and our Lutheran Confessions. People, particularly younger people, are increasingly interested in understanding what it means to be a Lutheran. Lutheranism is the oldest, continuing, evangelical movement in the Christian church—one that continues to draw people looking for a faithful, authentic proclamation of God's Word. It attracts people searching for a deeply satisfying spirituality that is rooted and grounded in Christ through His Word and Sacraments. What a tremendous mission opportunity our Synod has!

We are your publishing house. We thank you for your partnership, your

words of encouragement, your input, and your suggestions. There is so much to be excited about as we review our past year and look ahead to the future. May our almighty and gracious God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, give you peace and joy in your service to Him, and may He continue to bless The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

is the publishing arm of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It exists for the purposes of strengthening and aiding member congregations in their proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and working in partnership with the agencies and congregations of the Synod to provide publishing services. On their behalf,

Concordia Publishing House will develop, produce, market, and distribute products and services that are faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and which will effectively serve such proclamation to people throughout the world.

ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.



CPH management presents a check to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod for \$150,000.00 as authorized by the CPH Board of Directors. Pictured from left to right are Tom Kuchta, LCMS Vice President Finance-Treasurer; Bruce Kintz, Vice President/COO; Jonathan Schultz, Corporate Counsel; and Rev. Paul McCain, Interim President/CEO.



the Word of the Lord endures forever

FAITH AND FAMILY

by Ben Eder

It's a common scene in Christian churches throughout America. Parents attend worship without one or more of their children. One spouse goes to church while the other stays home. Young people attend without their parents.

It seems that in earlier, simpler times, families worshiped together. Perhaps not all believed, but societal and community pressure kept many nominal worshipers attending.

Today, that has changed. In fact, many community and sporting

events are scheduled on Sunday mornings, a time

that used to be off limits.

Many more retailers are open on Sunday mornings, too.

Perhaps you, or someone you know, is attending worship without one or more family members.

This raises important questions. Let's take a look at some of them and at what Scripture has to say about them:

What do parents owe their children (Eph. 6:4)? _____

What do children owe their parents (Eph. 6:1-3)? _____

How can the message of the Gospel divide families (Matt. 10:34-39)? _____

How would Jesus define a true family (Mark 3:31-35)? _____

How did Jesus' own family view Him? Read Mark 3:21 and John 7:5. _____

It must be noted that after Pentecost, Jesus' family—along with the apostles and others—became much more sure of their faith in Him and boldly proclaimed Him as Lord and Savior.

Read 1 Cor. 7:10-16. How should a believing spouse deal with an unbelieving spouse? Keep in mind that this passage probably refers to spouses who marry as unbelievers, then one of the spouses comes to faith in Christ during the marriage. _____

What does the shepherd do when one sheep is lost (Matt. 18:12-14)? _____

Now, read the "Parable of the Prodigal Son" in Luke 15:11-32.

Describe the response of the father when his wayward son returns. _____

How does the Lord deal with a weak faith (Is. 42:3)? _____

As long as there is life, there is hope for the wayward soul. Pray for that "lost sheep." Ask God for patience, as He has been patient with you. Be an encourager to the one who is questioning and struggling with the faith.

We cannot make someone believe; that is a gift of the Holy Spirit. We know that some hearts will not be open to receive the Good News. But in other hearts, the seed that was planted many years before will take root and flourish. Let us ask God for the courage and wisdom to share His Good News of Jesus with our unbelieving loved ones, that through their repentance and new-found faith there may be rejoicing in heaven (Luke 15:7).



Rev. Ben Eder is pastor at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Kenmore, N.Y.



HOPE IS ALIVE

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.... The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. ... So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matt. 28:1, 5-6, 8-10).

As the women walked to the tomb, they were not hopeful. Their hopes had been dashed when the One they believed to be the Messiah had been crucified. Yet, they went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with the spices they had bought.

We have One Message of Hope to share with each other, as well as with people still facing eternal death without faith in Christ in their hearts.

The scenario changed quickly. First, there was a message of hope from an angel. "He is not here; he has risen." Then, Jesus, the Lord of Life, reassured them, "Don't be afraid."

The women had gone to bury Jesus properly. Instead, the resurrected Jesus buried their hopelessness.

The message of Easter is a message of Hope. Jesus has conquered the power of sin, death and hell. He has begun His reign. We deserve

punishment for our sin, but He grants us forgiveness, life and salvation. He gives us hope.

This hope is ours through His grace in Holy Baptism. "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:4). Our sin is buried. We have life anew. Hope is alive!

Still, we face "tombs" in this life—situations where we feel helpless. The diagnosis of a disease, the death of a loved one, a family in conflict, the loss of a job, sending a loved one to battle—these are but a few. However, we can face these "tombs" with our living Jesus. We cling to Him on the way to the tomb, while we are there, and when we leave. He assures us, "Do not be afraid." Hope is alive!

This hope is eternal. The apostle Paul wrote, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead ..." (1 Cor. 15:19-20). We have the sure confidence that Jesus has prepared a place for us and will take us there.

We remain forever in His loving arms. Hope is alive!

A recent article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported on interviews with a number of military chaplains about the ministry they perform. Lt. Cmdr. Gregory Todd, 41, a Navy chaplain and LCMS minister, reported that members of the armed forces "who are religious are leaning heavily on their faith to give them courage and strength." He is in the Kuwaiti desert, serving Marines who are mostly in their



20s. Todd said, "They want to see and hear how my faith helps me as I face all the struggles that go with being deployed."

We have One Message of Hope to share with each other, as well as with people still facing eternal death without faith in Christ in their hearts. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:17-19 RSV).

The message of Easter—of our risen Christ—is one of Hope. Hope is alive! I pray that our gracious God will cause the path of your life to intersect with that of someone with whom might you share this message of hope, today and every day!

A blessed Easter to you all!

Jerry Kieschnick
Lives Transformed through Christ,
in Time ... for Eternity!

John 3:16-17

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