

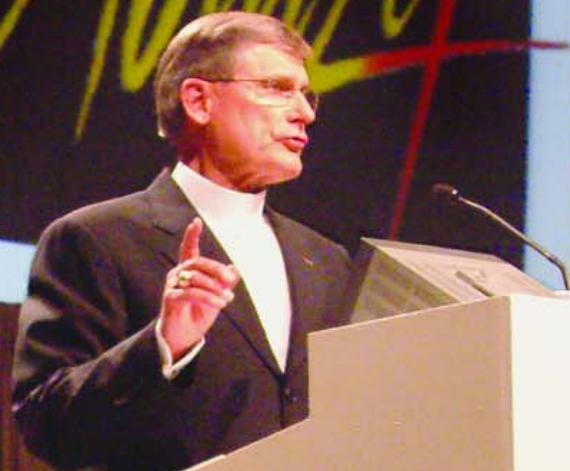
The Lutheran WITNESS

AUGUST 2004

VOL. 123 NO. 7

***Our Synod in
Convention***

**Also: The Gospel
in Guinea**





The Lutheran WITNESS

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

Features

AUGUST 2004

6 ONE MISSION—*ABLAZE!*... TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

by Don Folkemer

As delegates set the Synod's direction for the next three years, mission outreach is high on the list.



6

Kris Bueltman



16

Courtesy Kansas District

16 'LITTLE BY LITTLE'

by Roland Loustad

A mission among Maninka in northern Guinea survives war, persecution and interruptions to become a growing reflection of Pentecost.

22 ONE MORE ROUND

There's something very special in this evening of golf.

12 ONE MISSION—*ABLAZE!*... WORLDWIDE

by Paula Schlueter Ross

Pre-convention events put the spotlight on taking the Gospel to the world.

Departments



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You're Somebody Special
Page 3

3 Lifeline
Kristine K. Birus

4 Letters

14 National News

21 Searching Scripture
Carol Albrecht

24 Notices

26 People & Places/
Family Counselor

27 Q&A/
Shedding Some Light

28 From the President
Gerald B. Kieschnick



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Luther's record

Luther has been savaged unfairly by those who do not look at the entire historical record.

Dr. Albert E. Jabs
Columbia, S.C.

THE ARTICLE ON MARTIN LUTHER AND National Socialism by Uwe Siemon-Netto was exceptionally well documented and researched ("Luther and the Jews," April '04). Yes, Luther was a sinner, but he has been savaged unfairly by those who do not look at the entire historical record.

Roland Bainton, foremost biographer of Luther, insisted that the Reformer was not anti-semitic, but anti-Judaic, in the sense of Judaism rejecting the Gospel. No defense can be made of Luther's egregious remarks and their subsequent distorted use, but neither should one callously defame an entire person's life as some have attempted to do with Dr. Luther's.

Dr. Albert E. Jabs
Columbia, S.C.

UWE SIEMON-NETTO'S CLAIM THAT Luther cannot be considered the progenitor of the Nazis was weaker than it could have been. Indeed, hatred of Jews existed long before Luther, and Luther's writings probably were "forgotten until anti-Semites dug them up in the 20th century." But Siemon-Netto apparently saw no need to examine what Nazis themselves said about Luther—which seems to me to be of primary interest.

Hitler's only comment about Luther in *Mein Kampf* was merely to call Luther a "great statesman" akin to Frederick the Great. Arguments from silence are seldom, if ever, persuasive, but add to Hitler the desperate plea of Julius Streicher during the Nuremburg trials. Streicher, a prominent newspaperman and propagandist, argued that Luther should be on trial, for the

Nazis simply "drew conclusions" from Luther's writings about the Jews. While those words may seem damning, how much credence can we give a known distorter of the truth, who was on trial for despicable crimes against humanity?

Once again, Luther is shown to be a much more complex man than he is usually portrayed. It seems that no matter what we are looking for, we can find a basis for it in Luther's writings—only to discover a complication from somewhere else in his life. We as Lutherans should consider that we also may be failing to consider the "full Luther" or his impact on history, good and bad.

Rev. Sean Parker
Humble, Texas

AS THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR OF THE CONVENTION resolution referenced in the sidebar article to "Luther and the Jews," I commend Uwe Siemon-Netto. I have lectured long and often on this topic within the predominantly Jewish community that I serve. I hasten to add a third "rationale" to those listed by Siemon-Netto for Luther's authoring *On the Jews and Their Lies*: Luther's being declared an "outlaw," with evidence that some Jewish "bounty hunters" saw an opening to "right the wrongs" inferred even prior to those in that tract's seven hateful articles (pp. 268–272 in *Luther's Works: The Christian in Society IV*), which are far better known in Jewish circles than in our own Lutheran ones.

Rev. R. John Perling
Beverly Hills, Calif.

It's only fiction

AS A FAN OF HISTORICAL MYSTERIES, I found "The Truth about *The DaVinci Code*" (May '04) to be interesting. Unlike Brent McGuire, however, I do not consider anything I buy from the fiction section of my local bookstore to be anything but fiction. The historical context is there only to give a framework to the story which will contain a mixture of fact, fiction and conjecture in various proportions. This makes a good story and invites the reader to do more research to decipher any questions the reader may have.

Myron Molnau
Moscow, Idaho

We received several letters expressing this view. On the other hand, Dr. Paul Maier, a novelist himself and professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, who has written on *The DaVinci Code*, says that the reader of a novel "anticipates—and justifiably—that all information in the context of the novel is actually true even though the main characters may be fictional." He adds that with *The DaVinci Code*, "the reader assumes that the supplementary contextual and background detail involving Christianity is true when it is not."—Ed.

THANK YOU FOR THE INTERESTING article on *The DaVinci Code*.

Unfortunately, the photo on Page 7 is not of the Emperor Constantine I, who convened the first Council of Nicea. It's Constantine IX Monomachos, who reigned from 1042–1055 A.D.

Dr. Charles R. Hogg Jr.
Byron Township, Mich.

THE CAPTION UNDER THE TOP PICTURE on Page 8 reads, "A fourth-century Coptic text ...," but the text above

it is in Greek—in fact, the end of Luke and the beginning of John's Gospel.

*Dr. G.H. Liebenow
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Readers of The Lutheran Witness also ought to be confident that what is presented as fact is indeed true. We apologize for the errors in these photo captions.—Ed.

A loud 'Amen'

I CAN ONLY SHOUT A LOUD "AMEN" TO THE article by Dr. Jeffrey Gibbs on the doctrine of the resurrection ("Our Faith, Our Funerals, Our Future," April '04). I, too, have heard messages at funerals that, in effect, made the resurrection of the dead on the last day something of an afterthought, almost unnecessary, since the faithful departed have now entered eternal bliss. This, of course, is true, but it's not the whole story.

We still await the fullness of our redemption, the redemption of our bodies (check out Rom. 8:23), when spirit and body will be united in life eternal. It is great comfort to know that our departed loved ones are with Christ (Phil. 1:23). Let us also affirm at funerals for the faithful departed that we confess the apostolic faith, "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

*Rev. Ron Clawson
Elk Grove, Calif.*

A positive witness

JUST WANTED TO DROP YOU A NOTE TO say how much I enjoyed reading the June/July issue of *The Lutheran Witness*. It was filled with articles devoted to witnessing Christ through our Lutheran faith and remained very positive and inspiring! What a positive witness to members of the church and to the community of our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ!

*Rev. Deral E. Rollings
Gulf Shores, Ala.*

ONE MISSION—

Ablaze!

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH



Synod President Dr. Gerald Kieschnick presided over the five-day long convention.

As delegates set the Synod's direction for the next three years, mission outreach is high on the list.

by Don Folkemer

Addressing the 62nd Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod shortly after delegates returned him to office for a second three-year term, Synod President Gerald Kieschnick said that he believes his re-election “is not so much a vote for me personally as for the vision I’ve shared these past three years”

The president summarizes that vision as “One Mission, One Message, One People.” He has made a point of emphasizing mission outreach and was quick to embrace LCMS World Mission’s *Ablaze!* initiative to reach 100 million unreached people worldwide with the Gospel of Jesus Christ by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

Indeed, the vision and the mission emphasis were melded into the theme under which delegates to the 2004 Synod convention met July 10–15 in St. Louis: “One Mission”—*Ablaze!* ... To the Ends of the Earth.”

Electing our leaders

Probably nothing came before the delegates with more anticipation and pre-convention publicity than the election of the Synod president and five vice presidents. Much of the partisan mail that delegates received in the months before the convention spoke to the elections.

The anticipation was ended in a matter of minutes Sunday afternoon, July 11, when Kieschnick received 653 votes—52.8 percent of those cast—on the first ballot for president.

Also on the ballot were First Vice President Daniel Preus, who received 391 votes; President Dean O. Wenthe of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne,

107; Dr. Kurt E. Marquart, associate professor of systematic theology at the Fort Wayne seminary, 77; and Oklahoma District President William R. Diekelman, 9.

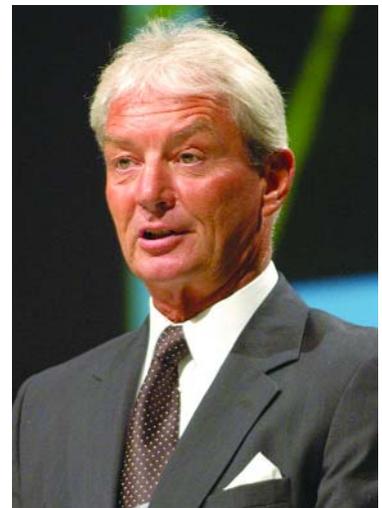
The election for first vice president gave the job to Diekelman, 57, who also is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Owasso, Okla. On the second ballot for that office, he received 641 votes to 588 for incumbent Daniel Preus. A third nominee on that ballot, Second Vice President Wallace Schulz, received 12 votes.

In later balloting, delegates elected the remainder of the Praesidium: for second vice president, Dr. Paul L. Maier, 74, currently fourth vice president; third vice president, Dr. Dean L. Nadasdy, pastor of Woodbury Lutheran Church, Woodbury, Minn.; fourth vice president, Dr. Robert L. King, the current second vice president; and for fifth vice president, Dr. David D. Buegler of Avon, Ohio, executive director of the Cleveland Lutheran High School Association.

Ablaze! and more

The convention adopted goals for *Ablaze!* and endorsed an effort to raise \$100 million—beyond the regular LCMS World Mission budget—over the next six years to support the initiative to share the Gospel with 100 million people worldwide.

The convention delegates elected Oklahoma District President William Diekelman to his first term as Synod first vice president. He also is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church, Owasso, Okla.



Delegates did debate the wisdom of launching a major fund-raising campaign in light of the church body's current financial shortfall. Speaking in favor of the resolution, however, one delegate stated, "Christ gave His life; how can we put a price on this hope? How can we keep this hope to ourselves?"

Thirty to 40 percent of the funds raised would be used in North America, with the remainder for international mission work.



After the resolution to endorse and to set goals for Ablaze! passed, Dr. Robert Roegner, executive director of LCMS World Mission, told the convention, "The Holy Spirit will lead this church" in achieving the goals.

The goals adopted for *Ablaze!* call for the start of 2,000 congregations in North America by 2017. The resolution encourages every member of LCMS congregations to "share the Good News of Jesus when the Holy Spirit provides opportunity."

Another resolution adopted by delegates promotes ethnic and urban ministry by asking congregations to "seize opportunities" for outreach and to provide "spiritual, technical and financial support" for inner-city churches and schools. It asks districts, circuits and "mission partnerships" to seek strategies for reaching people of other cultures and generations.

Delegates also voted to "endorse and respond enthusiastically" to Kieschnick's "One Mission, One Message, One People" emphasis—encouraging a stronger zeal for mission outreach, evangelical confession and efforts to achieve peace and concord in the Synod.

New partner church

Reaching 100 million people worldwide with the Gospel will not be accomplished by the Missouri Synod alone, mission leaders are quick to point out. LCMS partner churches around the world are being enlisted into the venture, and excitement for the initiative seems to be spreading (see story about pre-convention mission events, Page 12.)

As a result of convention action, there's yet another partner with which the Synod will work. Delegates voted overwhelmingly to formally declare altar and pulpit fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK). The declaration recognizes agreement in doctrine and practice between the two church bodies and permits the members of each to commune at the

other's altars and for their pastors to exchange pulpits.

"We have been happy and privileged to find the troops of Christ, as portrayed in Psalm 110, arrayed over here under His banner and according to the true faith, the pure doctrine," ELCK Bishop Walter Obare told the delegates after the vote. "This is the reason—that this alone—that we have approached you and extended out our hand to you, asking for cooperation and fellowship."

Obare spoke at length about the challenges facing the Christian church in the world today. In the West, he said, the challenge often is secularism. In Africa, it is Islam. Opposition to either may lead to suffering.

"We must not fear suffering," he said. "We know in the Word of God that God's Zion stands in the midst of God's enemies."

Obare encouraged mission work in Africa and commended *Ablaze!*

Mission 21st Century

Delegates also voted to affirm a resolution to expand the Synod's mission efforts worldwide by encouraging:

- "confessional and mission-minded" outreach in a "world that continues to change";
- affirmation of "the historical Lutheran understanding of the priesthood of all believers";
- congregations and schools to see themselves as "mission outpost[s] to all the unchurched";
- expansion of the Synod's work "in numerous cultures and among various people groups," and calling upon the church body to "witness in various languages and to engage the unchurched society with a clear confession of Jesus"; and
- the preparation of workers, so that they might "learn the cultures and languages" around them in order to

More than 1,200 voting delegates at the Synod's national convention voted to elect officers and boards, and to make major policy decisions.



“equip all the saints ... for mission and discipleship.”

The resolution was one of several submitted by the Mission 21st Century Task Force, which was appointed by President Kieschnick to find out why the Synod’s membership is declining, suggest ways for reversing that trend, and develop proposed resolutions for the convention that “capture the mission heart of the delegates and can effect change.”

Seeking peace

“It’s no secret that we in the Missouri Synod have experienced a period of disagreement for these past three years,” including among some in leadership, President Kieschnick told the convention. He said he prays “that would not continue.”

The focal point for much of that disagreement began with a post-9/11 event at New York’s Yankee Stadium. The event was titled “A Prayer for America,” and participants included Christian and non-Christian clergy.

There, on Sept. 23, 2001, Atlantic District President David Benke was among those to offer prayers.

A number of LCMS pastors and congregations formally charged Benke with unscriptural worship with non-Christians, sin against the First and Second Commandments, public defense of false doctrine and violation of the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws. Third Vice President Wallace Schulz suspended Benke in response to the charges. But a dispute-resolution panel later lifted Benke’s suspension.

At the convention, delegates commended the Council of Presidents (COP)—the Synod’s president, vice presidents and district presidents—for their commitment and leadership in seeking peace in the Synod, saying that the council “has committed itself to working for peace in the Synod for the sake of Christ’s mission to the world.”

The delegates also noted that the Mission 21st Century Task Force “has identified both inadequate attention to doctrine and the Synod’s difficulties in dealing with internal controversies as hindering the fulfillment of the Great Commission.”

Delegates asked Synod members to commit themselves anew to the Synod’s stated mission, to “make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.” In the same resolution, they also asked the COP, along with the faculties of the Synod’s two seminaries, to develop materials that “will foster such peace, harmony, and trust that together we may more effectively and faithfully fulfill the mission the Lord has entrusted to us.”

Guidelines for civic events

In a new report, the Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) addresses issues related to participation of LCMS pastors and others in civic events. “Guidelines for Participation in Civic Events,” the product of an assignment from President Kieschnick, was completed and adopted in April by the commission.

The convention voted 757–446 to commend the report “for study to help pastors, teachers, and church workers” make decisions that:

- “faithfully reflect our unqualified commitment to the absolute truth of the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God”;
- “seek to take advantage of every legitimate opportunity to proclaim clearly in the public realm that ‘only in and through Jesus do we have the definitive revelation of the true and only God,’ that God ‘is known as Father and Savior only through Spirit-wrought faith in Jesus Christ,’ and that ‘only the Triune God—

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the object of our worship and the hope of our salvation” [quoting from the report itself];

- “honor and uphold the free and willing commitments we have made with one another by virtue of our membership in the Synod”;

- “demonstrate concern and sensitivity for how participation (or non-participation) in civic events may be perceived by those inside and outside of the LCMS”;

- “recognize that ‘clarity in doctrine and practice and charity in our dealings with one another are both essential to the church’s life and witness.’”

Rev. Stephen J. Niermann of St. John Lutheran Church, Napoleon, Ohio, addresses an issue before the convention.



CONVENTION-GOERS GIVE \$222,959

Although Kieschnick asked the CTCR for guidelines only two months after District President Benke took part in “A Prayer for America,” Chairman Arleigh Lutz of the floor committee on theology and church relations made clear to the convention that the guidelines look forward, not backward.

“This document deals with from now to the future,” Lutz said. “It does not deal with the past.”

The Board and the Bylaws

Another center of controversy has been actions taken last November by the Synod’s Board of Directors to claim that eight opinions rendered by the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM)—most of them define limits to the Board’s authority—are “of no effect.” By a 113 vote margin, the convention adopted changes to the Synod’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws to limit the “management authority and duties” of the Board and to clarify the role of the CCM.

With this action, the convention overruled the Board. The resolution adopted by the delegates in so many words says, in fact, that it is the board’s actions that are “of no effect.”

At the opening worship service on Sunday, July 11, the delegates and visitors contributed \$222,959.26 toward the “One Mission Ablaze! National Offering.”

By the close of the convention, the total given was \$579,253. A week later, the total had grown to \$624,040.

The funds will be divided equally among LCMS World Mission, LCMS World Relief/Human Care and the Board for Higher Education’s “For the Sake of the Church” initiative.

To contribute to this special offering, send your check, payable to “One Mission Ablaze!,” to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, P.O. Box 790231, St. Louis, MO 63179-9723. For more information, visit <http://catalog.lcms.org> on the Web.

dying father’s request to the convention to just “stop the stupid fighting.”

Leonard Pranschke, the Synod’s legal counsel, told delegates that there are two models of how the Synod should operate. One gives the Board of Directors final authority over all decisions, including those made by individual corporate Synod boards and commissions. The other model allows individual boards to make their own decisions and to work autonomously. The latter model, presented in this resolution, provides for an arbiter, or referee, to decide questions of which board or officer of the Synod is to have decision-making authority. That role is served by the CCM.

“You must pick the model you want,” Pranschke told delegates.

Biblical marriage

In spite of disputes within the Synod, the convention demonstrated remarkable unanimity on some matters that are hot-button issues in many other church bodies. Biblical marriage is an example.

By a nearly unanimous vote (1,163 to 22), the delegates affirmed, “on the basis of Scripture, marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman.” The resolution urges members of the Synod “to give a public witness from Scripture against the social acceptance and legal recognition of homosexual ‘marriage.’”

Noting that there are calls in America for legal recognition of same-sex unions as “marriages,” the convention said, “For our Synod to be silent ... could be viewed as acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle.”

The resolution notes that homosexual behavior is prohibited in the Old and New Testaments “as contrary to the Creator’s design.” Without debate, the delegates included an amendment that adds, “God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His



Synod President Dr. Gerald Kieschnick confers with Leonard Young, the parliamentarian for the convention, as “points of order” and amendments complicate resolutions and procedures.

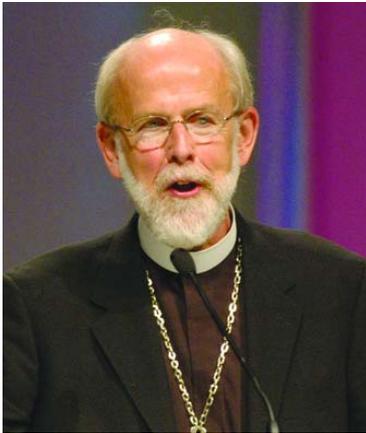
Nearly two hours of debate preceded the vote, often with three or four delegates waiting at each of the 12 floor microphones to address the issue. Some questioned whether the CCM—an appointed commission—should have authority over the Board of Directors, whose members are elected by the convention. Others favored the resolution and said they felt the Board had indeed “exceeded its authority.” One delegate quoted his

bride, the Church (Eph. 5:32).”

The convention urged Synod members to “deal with sexual sins with the same love and concern as all other sins, calling for repentance and offering forgiveness in the Good News of Jesus Christ when there is repentance.”

Talking with ELCA

One church body that is wrestling with issues related to human sexuality is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).



ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson brought greetings to the convention.

In a resolution addressing LCMS-ELCA relationships, the convention encouraged “substantive conversations” with the ELCA. At the same time, it recognized the seriousness of concerns expressed by the Synod’s Praesidium over the ELCA’s ecumenical agreements and its current deliberations regarding same-sex unions and the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

The resolution encourages President Kieschnick and the joint Committee on Lutheran Cooperation to have conversations with

ELCA “in a continuing effort to bear witness to the truth of the Scriptures and the Confessions in the hope that agreement can be reached in those areas where we disagree.”

Much of the Praesidium’s report focused on the military chaplaincy where the two church bodies have agreed that their chaplains may provide Word and Sacrament ministry to all Lutheran military personnel.

An effort from the floor to end all joint work with the ELCA that involves Word and Sacrament ministry was defeated.

Later, ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson brought greetings to the convention. He told the gathering that he is “profoundly grateful” for its decision to continue discussions with his church body.

New hymnal

The draft of a proposed new hymnal received clear approval from the convention as “an official service book and hymnal” for the Synod, with a 1,014–130 vote.

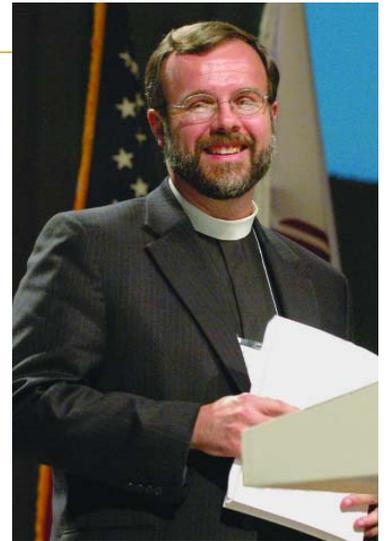
The 1998 convention adopted a resolution to encourage work to begin the a new hymnal. The 2001 convention called for its contents to be brought to the 2004 convention for final acceptance.

Dr. Paul Grime, project director and executive direc-

tor of the Commission on Worship, told delegates that after extensive input from the field, multiple doctrinal reviews, an opinion from the CTCR and field testing, the 280-page proposal for the hymnal was sent to all of the convention delegates.

After delegates applauded the hymnal’s acceptance, they gave a standing ovation to Grime and the members of the commission and its sub-committees that have been working on it.

Concordia Publishing House will publish the new hymnal for distribution by mid 2006. The resolution encourages “congregations and other entities of Synod” to participate in an introductory process for the new *Lutheran Service Book*.



Dr. Paul Grime, project director for the new hymnal and executive director of the Commission on Worship, responds to the delegates applauding their acceptance of the new Lutheran Service Book.

Women in congregational offices

As a result of convention action, LCMS congregations now may permit women to hold any congregational office that does not involve the exercise of distinctive functions of the office of pastor.

After more than 40 minutes of debate, delegates voted 576–520 to affirm the conclusions of a 1994 report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, “The Service of Women in Congregational and Synodical Offices.” The convention commended the CTCR for its work and resolved:

- to “affirm that women on the basis of the clear teaching of Scripture may not serve in the office of pastor nor exercise any of its distinctive functions, and that women may serve in humanly established offices in the church as long as the functions of these offices do not make them eligible to carry out ‘official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office’”;
- to “urge the members of the Synod, in making decisions regarding which offices women may hold, to bear in mind the CTCR’s counsel that congregations organize ‘themselves in ways that complement and reinforce the family, for the church is the “household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15)’”;
- to “encourage men not to neglect their leadership responsibilities in their congregations”; and
- that when considering changes in the service of women, congregations consult with neighboring

LCMS congregations, “recognizing that in matters of Christian liberty, Christians are called, above all, to do what edifies the church, respecting the consciences of others.”

Before the vote was taken, CTCR Executive Director Samuel H. Nafzger told the convention that with adoption of the resolution, the conclusions of the CTCR’s report “now become the position of the Synod, and congregations may have women hold these offices.”

In response to a question from one of the Synod’s districts, the CTCR earlier this year said, “There is no ‘Thus saith the Lord’ regarding positions such as executive director/president and assistant director/vice president. These are offices established by the church in Christian freedom. Scripture does not prohibit women who possess the requisite gifts from holding these humanly established offices, assuming that the occupants of these offices do not ‘perform those functions that are distinctive to the public exercise of the ministry of Word and sacraments’ ... or carry out ‘official functions [that] would involve public accountability for the function of the pastoral office. ...’”

Funding and stewardship

Funding the Synod’s national and international work has been a problem for many years. In recent years, declining revenue has forced a reduction in the number of missionaries overseas and church workers at the Synod’s International Center.

The historical funding system of free-will support—from the people to their congregations, then to districts, then finally to national and international work—has increasingly generated funds “designated” to specific missions, leaving a smaller part of the Synod budget for the Board of Directors to use to meet actual funding needs.

This convention started a process to address the problem by empowering the president to appoint a blue ribbon task force to bring recommendations to the 2007 convention. They also directed the districts and the national Synod to communicate and collaborate “to ensure the ways and means of maintaining or increasing current levels of financial support under our present funding system.”

In a separate action, delegates called for promotion of “Stewardship Ablaze,” a unified stewardship education initiative, beginning in 2006. It is intended to “raise awareness of faithful stewardship” in all LCMS congregations, according to the resolution adopted by the convention.

Florida-Georgia District President Gerhard C. Michael Jr. told the convention that the resolution was about Biblical stewardship. “It’s not all about money, but stewardship includes money,” Michael said. “The heart of it

all is Jesus Christ. Freely we have received, and freely we should give.”

Teacher-education resolutions

The convention indicated that it would like to see teachers in LCMS schools be better trained in Lutheran theology.

Delegates encouraged congregations to require non-Synod-certified grade-school teachers who are members of LCMS congregations and have a bachelor’s degree to go through the Synod’s Teacher Colloquy Program.

A related resolution addressed the education of non-LCMS teachers, who are not eligible for teacher colloquy. The floor committee on higher education, which introduced the resolutions, noted that many congregations “engage teachers virtually untrained in Lutheran theology for their school classrooms.” It said that for congregations “intent upon offering a Lutheran education ... the matter is highly significant.”

By vote of 1,031–160, the convention adopted the resolution, which calls for non-Missouri Synod teachers to participate in a short series of professional-development seminars. The seminars would concentrate on doctrine and practices of the LCMS.

Creation

In the final action before the close of the convention, delegates commended “preaching and teaching creation.”

“The Scriptures teach that God is the creator of all that exists and is therefore the author and giver of life,” the resolution states. “The hypotheses of macro, organic and Darwinian evolution, including theistic evolution, or any other model denying special, immediate and miraculous creation undercut this support for the honoring of life as a gift of God,” it continues.

The convention resolved that all Synod schools—from preschools to universities and seminaries—“continue to teach creation from the Biblical perspective.”

For more information

A single article can only begin to report on the convention. Much more information is available online.

For a complete listing of and access to news stories prepared by the Synod’s news team during the convention, go to www.lcms.org/convention and click on “News” in the menu at the left side of the page. Other links from that page will provide even more convention information.



Don Folkemer is managing editor of The Lutheran Witness.

ONE MISSION— *Ablaze!* WORLDWIDE

Pre-convention events put the spotlight on taking the Gospel to the world.

by Paula Schlueter Ross

LCMS World Mission took advantage of this year's Synod convention to host several pre-convention events to mark the success of one bold initiative and the ambitious start of another.

Hundreds of current and former missionaries, some two dozen leaders of LCMS overseas partner churches and hundreds more Lutherans interested in cross-cultural ministries in the United States met with the Synod's national mission leaders in St. Louis to praise God and learn from one another.

Two events introduced and promoted *Ablaze!*, LCMS World Mission's initiative to share the Gospel with 100 million people worldwide by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

The first event, "One Mission Ablaze—Lighting the Flame Summit ... Around the World," June 28–July 2, brought together dozens of "career" missionaries and their families for spiritual nurture, study and fellowship. A



Dr. Robert Scudieri, associate executive director for LCMS World Mission, called the more than 1,000 cross-cultural ministries started under the "Pentecost 2000" initiative "a gift from God."

second gathering, July 9–11, involved hundreds of former missionaries.

Rev. John Mehl, the mission board's regional director for Eurasia, said the meetings were well received. Many of the current missionaries—even some serving the same regions—had never met, he said, and the discussions were helpful in creating a cohesiveness among them.

"If anything, we've been focused so sharply on the work that we do [individually] that we have failed to see that we're one mission," Mehl said.

The second event was the *Ablaze!* International Summit, a July 7–9 meeting of 28 presidents and bishops—or their representatives—of overseas partner churches with the Synod's national mission leaders. That event also focused on worldwide outreach and included studies of "what works" and strategic planning for future endeavors.

Archbishop Janis Vanags, who heads the Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Latvia, said the gathering of international Lutheran leaders was “a very decisive and concrete step” toward working more closely together in Gospel outreach worldwide.

For 50 years under Communist rule, the Lutheran church in Latvia “struggled only to survive,” losing about 80 percent of its clergy, Vanags said. “I think it’s very important we see mission as the response to different problems in today’s world, and mission as a way to strive for healing in the world.”

Two larger events were held to celebrate “Pentecost 2000/Pentecost 2000+,” or “P2K,” the mission board’s initiative to start 1,000 cross-cultural ministries in the United States that came to a close at the Synod convention, and to officially launch *Ablaze!*, the 13-year Gospel-sharing campaign that runs through Reformation Day (Oct. 31), 2017.

“One People—Many Faces,” July 9–10, celebrated the success of P2K, which led to the start of 1,011 new ministries, and included videotaped and live testimonies from Lutherans involved in African immigrant, Asian, Muslim and other non-white ministries. Originally intended as a two-year program, P2K was extended for three years as “Pentecost 2000+.” The 1,000-ministry goal was reached this year.

“The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has changed; we look more like the faces of heaven,” said Dr. Robert Scudieri, associate executive director for LCMS World Mission’s national mission team and a P2K leader. Scudieri called each cross-cultural ministry “a gift from God,” and credited God with P2K’s success. God also will bless *Ablaze!*, he said.

“It’s not how faithful we have been to God, but how faithful God has been to us,” he said.

Taking part in “Mission Celebration” July 10 were the leaders of partner church bodies in 25 countries, who assembled on stage, forming a backdrop for Dr. Robert Roegner’s invitation to an audience of several thousand to make a personal commitment to the *Ablaze!* initiative.

“Now is the time to be in mission,” said Roegner, executive director of LCMS World Mission. Four billion people don’t know Christ as their Savior, Roegner said. And, while the *Ablaze!* goal of witnessing to 100 million people by 2017 has been called “impossible” by some, it is, he said, “only a small portion of the people who need to hear the Gospel.”



Bishop David Tswaedi of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa was one of several leaders of partner church bodies in 25 countries to address the pre-convention Mission Celebration.

“How will we reach them? Here is the answer,” Roegner said, gesturing to the partner-church leaders.

“Thousands of people are eager” to hear God’s Word, said Dr. Allan Yung, president of The Lutheran Church—Hong Kong Synod. One Chinese pastor he knows, Yung said, “baptized 1,300 people in one Sunday.”

Bishop David Tswaedi, president of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, pledged the support of Lutherans on six continents to reaching the *Ablaze!* goal. “One hand cannot wash itself,” he said,

referencing an African adage. “We as Lutherans—together ... together ... together—will bring the Gospel that saves humanity to the people.”

“God never failed anybody,” Tswaedi said, “and will not fail Lutherans.”

A few hours later, sitting on the grass at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, during its “SemFest” international food sampling event, Rev. Yared Halche, an Ethiopian who serves African immigrant ministries on the West Coast, said he was “touched” by the testimonies of Lutherans from various ethnic groups who spoke during the Pentecost 2000+ and Mission Celebration gatherings.

“I consider this a foretaste of heaven,” he said, in reference to the diversity of skin color and native costumes evident at those events and at the SemFest.

Halche brought 25 African immigrants to St. Louis to take part in the P2K and missions celebrations. They wanted to come, he said, to “express their joy” for the P2K emphasis and for *Ablaze!*

Halche said he appreciated the Synod’s openness and willingness to work side-by-side with non-white Lutheran leaders. “It’s no more ‘them and us,’—it’s now ‘we,’” he said.

He considers the *Ablaze!* goal of reaching 100 million people an ambitious, but worthy, goal. He is confident, he said, that it will be reached—and maybe even surpassed—because “God works through our plan, and God is bigger than our plan.”



Paula Schlueter Ross is a contributing editor for The Lutheran Witness.

‘LITTLE BY LITTLE’

The Gospel starts to take root among Muslims in Guinea, West Africa.

by Roland Lovstad

Missionary Tim Norton quotes this West African proverb as he describes the challenge of Christian mission among the Maninka people in northern Guinea, a West African country about the size of Oregon. “The meaning being that with perseverance, what seems to be an insurmountable task eventually—by even imperceptible increments—gets finished.”

For two missionary families that made new homes in Siguiri, Guinea, earlier this year, the process has been one of small increments and global partnerships. It grows from missionary zeal among Christian refugees, new believers and a partnership among LCMS World Mission, Guinean Lutherans and the Kansas District.

Tim and Heidi Norton and their son, Philip, moved to Guinea in January with a goal to introduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ to 250,000 people in the Siguiri region, then to 4 million Maninka who live in West Africa, and then even further to 22 million Africans who share elements of language and culture.

Jonathan and Sharon Oetting and their children Rachel, Joel and Anna, joined the Nortons in March.

Missionary zeal in refugee camps

This building “little by little” process has many stories—more than can be told completely here. It began a decade ago when civil wars in the neighboring countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone—and later in the Ivory Coast forced LCMS missionaries to leave.

Some of the people they had reached escaped to refugee camps in southern Guinea, near Gueckedou, close to the border with Liberia. They brought their Christian faith and a missionary zeal. Even though displaced, they evangelized Guineans and, when they were able to return to their own countries, they left behind a new indigenous Guinean Lutheran church.

LCMS missionary Rev. Tim Heiney, assigned by LCMS World Mission to Guinea, suggested outreach to the Maninka, solidly Muslim and a minority in the region. When the Oettings arrived in 1998, they began learning

Maninka language and culture.

“It doesn’t happen often that a group will give up their missionary to another group,” said

Oetting in a July interview. “From the very beginning, that missionary zeal needs to be planted, and it was borne out with the church in Guinea.”

Even as it gave up its missionaries, the Guinean Lutheran church, primarily Kisi people in southern Guinea, continues to grow. It now counts more than 130 congregations and has begun to establish Christian schools.

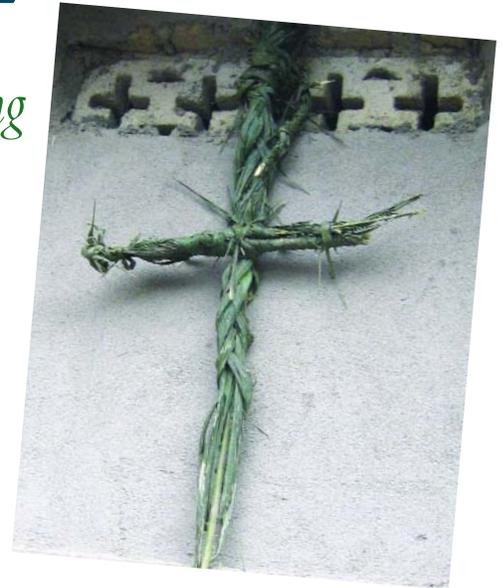
Turned on its head

In September 2000, civil strife spread into Guinea across the border from Liberia and the U.S. Embassy instructed the Oettings to leave. They moved north to Kankan and after three weeks took leave in the United States. While on leave they learned that their homes had been looted. They lost everything.

“The strategy to reach minority people in Gueckedou ... it was all turned on its head,” Oetting said.

In the United States, they experienced physical, spiritual and psychological healing, according to Oetting. After nine months, he decided to “return out of obedience,” although it was hard to go back. In consultation with Rev. Ken Greinke, LCMS World Mission regional director for Africa, he returned to Kankan and identified a new plan reach to the Muslim Maninka. In May 2003, the decision was made to move north.

The Heiney family chose to remain in the United States, although Tim Heiney’s missionary work continues. He has been called to serve half-time at Lord of Life



Lutheran Church in Leawood, Kan., and half-time as the Kansas District's missionary to Guinea.

First baptisms

For the missionary team, May 23 this year was a day of good news when two men were baptized in Siguiri. Oetting reported in his June e-mail newsletter, "Tim Norton conducted the baptism of the two men before the other worshipers who came from places as diverse as Mali, Ghana and Liberia, as well as Guinea. The [worship] services of this fellowship, which calls itself 'Growing in Grace,' are conducted in Maninka, French and English. It truly has a Pentecost feeling. This fellowship has been worshipping together before the Lutheran Mission arrived

on the scene, but it has welcomed our presence and requested Bible teaching that Tim provides on a weekly basis."

Since moving to Siguiri, Tim Norton, who first came to Guinea in 2001, has been using a "storying" method of teaching. "Here,



Rev. Tim Heiney, Kansas District President Keith Kohlmeier and Chuck Merriman with two Guinean boys on their travels this past spring.



Photos Courtesy of Kansas District

"Despite the difficulty or unpleasantness, we still have the commitment to share the greatest gift—salvation—with Muslim people. It's a difficult and risky place to live, working among resistant people."

Jonathan Oetting

Muslims will name their children Moses or Abraham, but they don't know the stories of these men.

They're anxious to learn about them," said Norton. "We say we're here to teach you about God's Word."

In Siguiri, a Maninka

man—one of those who were baptized in May—heard the Bible stories. Although he had been introduced to Christianity 10 years earlier, the stories intrigued him and he asked Norton, "Why not teach in my area?"

Before any teaching is done, however, the first step is to meet with the headman of the village. In January, the *dugu tigi*, or headman, granted permission to teach.

The Word spreads

People from other villages heard the stories, and, by May, Norton had been invited to teach in five villages.

For Muslims, God's word includes the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel (the Koranic names of the books are *Taurat*, *Zabur* and *Injil*). But few can read. So Norton begins at Genesis, presenting the Bible in chronological format, using visual aids. He encourages literacy, using an indigenous script called "*N'ko*."

Pulling a verse out of each story, he encourages memorization and writing the verse on a chalkboard.

The stories give opportunities to talk about God's promises and how they are achieved in Jesus, Norton said. He recently finished the chronological process in the first village where some 35 people, including men and women of various ages were involved.

"What it has done is kept the communication open," he commented. "The hardest thing is not converting Muslims, but getting an audience."

As he works on building his language capabilities, Oetting is teaching personal Bible studies and serving administrative functions.

Praying for a movement

"For more than 60 years, work among the Maninka has met with very little success," Oetting said. "We are praying for a people movement among the Maninka, that these 2 million would receive Christ. They are a key group to reach the other Muslim people groups in West Africa. They are related to other language—people groups—a way to eventually reach 22 million people."

AN INVITATION TO GET INVOLVED IN MISSION WORK

Mission work in Guinea, West Africa, provides one kind of model for LCMS World Mission's vision of *Ablaze!* The Kansas District has partnered with LCMS World Mission since 1997 to provide opportunities for its congregations and members to become involved in mission work "to the ends of the earth."

Beginning with just four Together In Mission (TIM) congregations (that adopt missionary families for prayer and for spiritual, emotional, physical and financial support), the number of TIM congregations that support the work in Guinea has grown to 80.

Marvin Kohlmeier, called by the Kansas District seven years ago to be its full-time mission development counselor, says, "Anytime congregational members have a personal relationship with a missionary family, the Seven Mission Responses [Learn, Pray, Give, Tell, Send, Go, Celebrate] become the vehicle for a life-changing experience. They realize that even if they can't *go* [to the ends of the earth], they can *send*, pray, give, celebrate ... and so on."

Jane Limback, a sixth-grade teacher at Hope Lutheran School in Shawnee, Kan., says her mission involvement with the people of Guinea through the Synod-Kansas District partnership "has been a real blessing.

"The children have done several projects for Guinea," she reports. "Last year, the sixth graders and their parents made clay bricks using dirt, water and milk cartons and then built a model of an African church building. Then we poured water over it to show the children what happens when it rains on a [mud brick] church building without a proper roof. As a result the children collected enough in gifts to buy an entire metal roof for a congregation."

The opportunity to be personally involved in mission "makes you more aware of international things, and in this case, more aware about our brothers and sisters in Christ in Africa," says Limback. "And you realize your world is a lot bigger than you thought it was."

Ablaze! began as a vision of LCMS World Mission to involve every member of the LCMS, its partner church bodies and partner mission agencies in one focused and concentrated effort to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who do not yet know him. The Synod's mission agency believes this effort will strengthen our own Synod, mission organizations and congregations through mission involvement.

Additionally, all our Lutheran resources would be strategically coordinated, so that more can be accomplished in mission to the glory and honor of God. LCMS World Mission wants to give this vision away—to ignite a spark that would become a mission movement of individuals, groups, congregations, etc., all committed to the goal of reaching 100 million unreached and uncommitted people with the Gospel by 2017—the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

For LCMS World Mission, *Ablaze!* is *not* a program or a campaign ... it's an *invitation*.

For more information about *Ablaze!* call LCMS world Mission at (800) 433-3954, or visit www.lcmsworldmission.org. For more information about the Kansas District partnership to support work in Guinea, see www.kslcms.org. To learn more about becoming a Together In Mission congregation through LCMS World Mission, call (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1651.

—Jenny L. Koenig

Director, Communication Services
LCMS World Mission

Relationships, he said, are vital. He told of one Maninka family that he knew three years before and renewed their friendship in Siguiri. "You have to have that acceptance before you can share the Gospel in this setting."



Elena Merriman makes a new friend on her trip to the Kissidougou region of Guinea with the Kansas District delegation.

Noting that the Muslims are resistant to Christianity, Oetting adds that Guinea is a country where relationships are not polarized. "We have an entry, a moment when we can share. They are receptive." He said the resistance could be attributed to culture, and persecution can be manifested to new believers.

"We have to remember we are working in a sensitive situation," he adds. "People notice when a man does not go to the mosque or participate in prayer five times a day. It's a

situation where 'my father was Muslim and so am I.' Whole villages are Muslims.

"It will take perseverance, hard work, sweat and tears to reach them through the power of the Holy Spirit with the greatest gift we can share—out of love—Jesus Christ," Oetting said.

Partnership brings growth in Kansas

Halfway around the globe, Kansas District congregations maintain an active interest in the Guinea mission, including the work of the Oettings and the Nortons, as well as the Guinean Lutheran church in the south. The district supports the work.

"It is not just raw dollars," said Rev. Keith Kohlmeier, the district president. "It is inter-

action with mission. Everything we do is in partnership with LCMS World Mission."

Led by Tim Heiney, Kohlmeier and six other Kansans visited Guinea last March.

"It was like stepping back into Pentecost; it was just marvelous to see what God is doing in that place," Kohlmeier said of visits among congregations in southern Guinea. "The church is growing so fast only God can keep up with it."

He said people would wait for two days in the marketplaces and villages because they heard the Kansans were visiting. "To see people stand up and profess

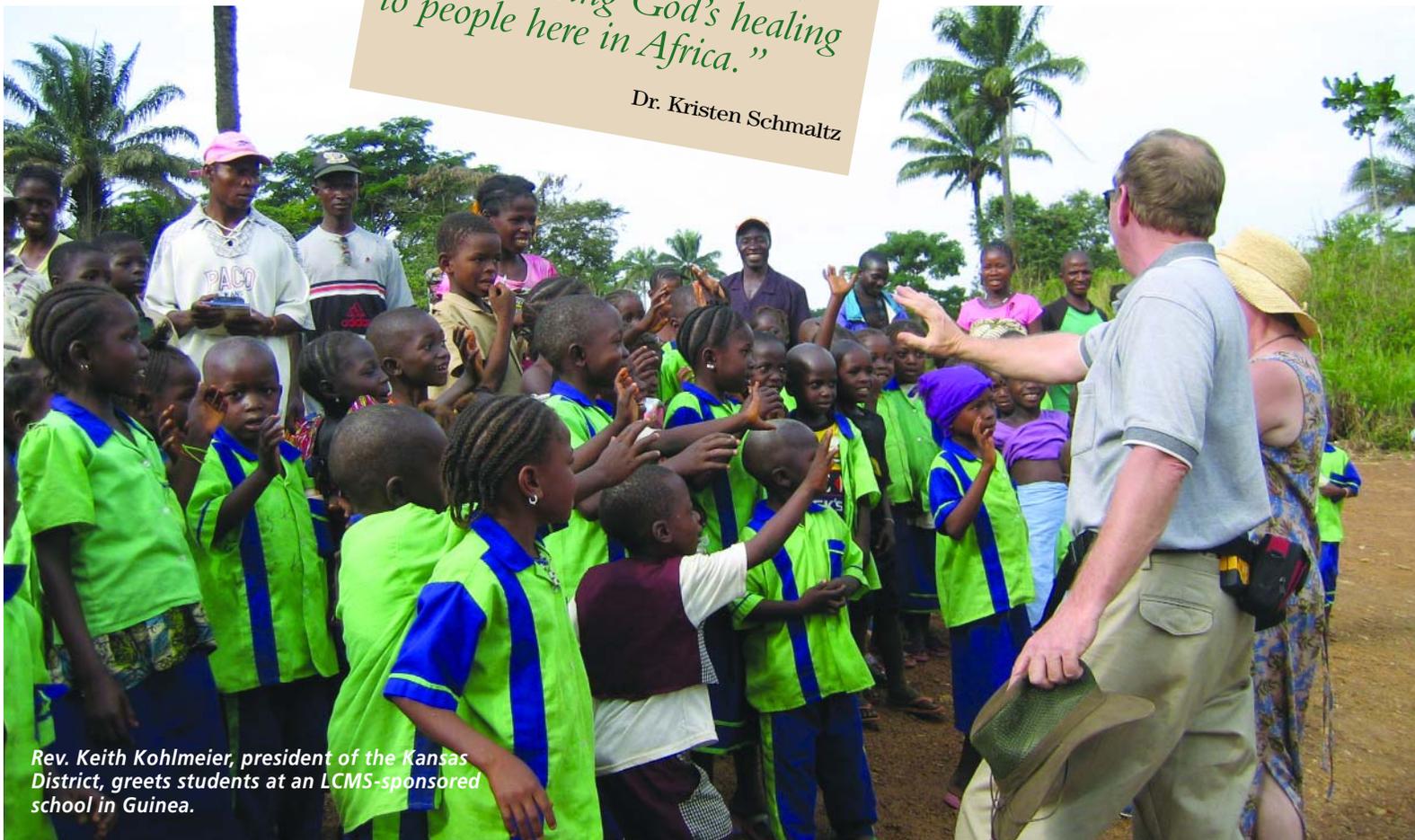
their faith and, at the same time, asking to know even more about this Jesus. They were pleading for evangelists to teach them more."

He said the Kansas district intends to provide more on-site visits and volunteer opportunities for members of Kansas congregations.

"Our mission giving has increased exponentially since this partnership," Kohlmeier said. "Our sense of mission

"These are beautiful children. I see starving children looking like skeletons, victims who are on their last breath and still they haven't heard about Jesus. God has called me to be faithful. He is responsible for their healing and their salvation. I want to bring God's healing to people here in Africa."

Dr. Kristen Schmaltz



Rev. Keith Kohlmeier, president of the Kansas District, greets students at an LCMS-sponsored school in Guinea.

MEDICAL MISSIONARY IN THE FOREST

"These are beautiful children. I want them to know that He is a loving God," said Dr. Kristin Schmaltz, who for two-and-a-half years has served as a medical missionary in the forest region of Guinea near Kissidougou.



A pediatrician by training, she works with the nutrition and pediatric units of the local hospital and teaches nutrition in villages and refugee camps. She says she is also proud of the

Kountaya Health Care Team, which she helped

train, that provides medical response and health-care information among refugees.

Schmaltz thanked the parish nurses in Kansas who gather hats, blankets and booties in "action packs." She needs these, she said, "for malnourished children. There is not enough fat on their bodies, and they die of hypothermia without these things." Toys and coloring books, also in the packs, provide stimulation to "get them started in their life again."

Her heart especially goes out for the children: "I've laid hands on them; I've baptized them; I've prayed for them."

—R.C.L.



Dr. Kristen Schmaltz recalls her grandmother told her before she left for Africa, "You share Jesus with them; you know Him." She says Muslim doctor colleagues are giving her opportunities to share Christian care along with her medical knowledge.

THE LUTHERAN WITNESS

"Thanks for the support that allows us to do this. There are many such opportunities around the world, including back at home. Pray to be open to these opportunities."

Tim Norton

toward

our own communities

also has grown. The people of local congregations are getting their feet on the ground and their hands involved in mission locally."

The Kansas District supports the mission in three ways: from its budget; through the Together in Mission program, in which congregations and individuals make gifts beyond their regular giving; and with a mission developer, Marvin Kohlmeier, who develops support for specific projects. (Marvin Kohlmeier, for example, identified and enlisted congregations to support the service of Audrey Roglitz, who, at well beyond retirement age, is serving as volunteer teacher for the children in the Oetting family.)

The district also supports Dr. Kristin Schmaltz, a physician who serves in Kissidougou, providing health care and nutrition instruction and pediatric services. Parish nurses in Kansas gather "Action Packs" with booties, blankets and toys that Schmaltz uses in refugee camps and Guinean villages.

President Kohlmeier added that the Children's Christian Concern Society, a Recognized Service Organization housed in the district offices, is working with the Guinean church to establish some 60 schools in southern Guinea.

"It's the very definition of 'synod,' President Kohlmeier said. "We have identified a common plan to do the mission. In almost every Kansas congregation you see the same pictures of missionaries and hear those same names raised in prayer."



Roland Lovstad is a freelance writer and a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Perryville, Mo.

IN LATER LIFE

by Carol Albrecht

Our society today seems to be geared toward the young. Clothes, entertainment, arts and culture are all greatly influenced by what the younger generation finds interesting. At the same time, the number of older people in our country is rapidly increasing. But they often feel left out, forgotten in this youth-oriented society.

Where do they fit in? What plans does God have for them? And how are younger people to view and treat their elders?

What does God want *all* of us to remember about our life on earth? Look at Ps. 90:10 for an insight before writing your answer.

What is the lesson for us in verse 12?

Old age often brings health problems and a loss of ability to do things that gave joy in younger days. It's sometimes tempting for the elderly to ask why God has allowed them to stay so long on this earth, and to question what usefulness there is left in their less capable bodies and minds. What does God have to say about this in these Psalms?

Ps. 92:14–15 _____

Ps. 148:7–12 _____

Why are the elderly especially well-suited to proclaim God's praises?

What are some of the blessings God gives the elderly?



Job 12:12 _____

Prov. 17:6 _____

Now read Job 32:7–8. What must the elderly have in order to be fully wise, and why do you believe this is important?

God has a special concern for seniors. How does He want them to be treated? Read Lev. 19:32 and Prov. 23:22.

Senior citizens have real concerns about their remaining years. They may be worried about their health, about finances, about their future. How does David address these concerns in Ps. 37:25?

In the same light, what encouraging words does God give to older people in Is. 46:4?

God has important work for the older generation, and a great love for His people as their time on earth grows short. The psalmist's prayer as he contemplated his later years in Ps. 71:18 speaks not only of God's love but also gives meaning to the lives of older people: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come."



Carol Albrecht is a member of Centennial Lutheran Church, Superior, Neb.

A WORD OF THANKS

As I write this article, the 62nd Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has just concluded. Much prayer, extensive deliberation and many decisions marked this gathering of representatives from across our church body. Delegates adopted resolutions, amended synodical governing documents and elected officers and other leaders. As is often the case, numerous resolutions could not be considered due to the expiration of convention time.

On behalf of the Synod, I offer a sincere word of thanks and appreciation to those who served faithfully during the past three years and now leave their positions in the hands of those who will succeed them. It is a privilege and responsibility to serve as an officer or member of a board or commission of the Synod, whether that period of service is brief or extensive.

Please pray with me that the theme of our convention will become reality in the congregations of our great Synod: One Mission—Ablaze!

Upon my re-election as president of the Synod, I addressed the convention briefly. I included words to this effect:

Thank you, dear friends in Christ, for this expression of trust and confidence. I am deeply humbled by your vote. Allow me to share with you a word from the Apostle Paul: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he con-

sidered me faithful, appointing me to his service” (1 Tim. 1:12).

It is my belief that your vote in giving me the opportunity, challenge and burden of continuing to serve as the president of our beloved Synod is not so much a vote for me personally but for the vision I’ve shared these past three years and for the entirety of my 34 years of public ministry. The vision I hold so near and dear is not simply a six-word cliché: *One Mission, One Message, One People*. It is a deeply held conviction that God’s blessing has been given to our church for a reason. We have been blessed to be a blessing! We dare not take that blessing for granted.

One final word of thanks and appreciation to my dear wife, Terry, who has stood faithfully by my side for 38 years, many of which have been accompanied by stress and pressure of many kinds. In that regard, few, if any, of those years have exceeded the past three. She bears in her heart a deep respect and abiding love for the church and for the women of the church, especially the wives of pastors and other professional church workers, ... particularly the wives of the Council of Presidents and pastors of our Synod.

Thanks also to the members of our immediate and extended family for their sacrifices these past three years in seeing once-frequently present parents and grandparents become largely absent from family events and holiday gatherings. They all live in Texas ... and are near and dear to us. We love you, miss you and hold you in our hearts and prayers always.



A final word from the apostle Paul: “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:3–6).

Thank you and God bless each and every one of you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

All those elected at this important gathering and all who serve in mission and ministry in the entire Synod, working together under the grace of God and the power of His Holy Spirit, can make a difference in the lives of many people. Please pray with me that the theme of our convention will become reality in the congregations of our great Synod: *One Mission—Ablaze!*

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

John 3:16–17

e-mail: president@lcms.org

Web page: www.lcms.org/president