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AUGUST 2005

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Also:
Anguish and Assurance
on Campus
The Smalcald Articles

KYRGYZSTAN: LAND OF HARDSHIPS AND MIRACLES

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The Lutheran WITNESS

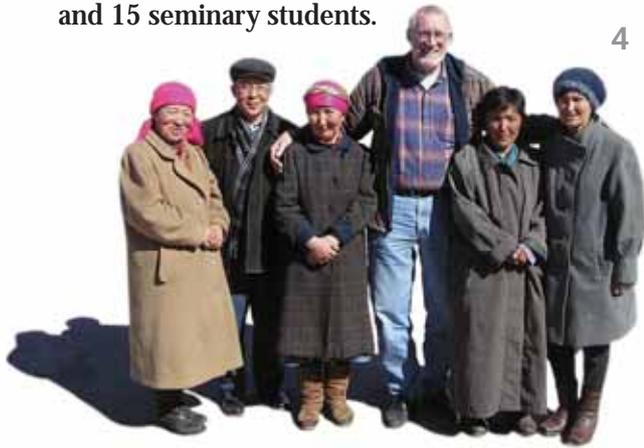
A MAGAZINE FOR THE LAYPEOPLE OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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A little decorum, please

Let's work on building strong families, where God is worshiped at home as well as in church. Then, the behavior in church will follow.

*Roger Rehbein
Oakdale, Minn.*

I AGREE THAT THE BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN in churches today ("Letters," June–July '05) differs from what I remember growing up. However, consider the differences between now and then.

Many fathers no longer attend church with their families, making their wives "Sunday-morning widows." It is hard for a single parent to take a misbehaving child out of church (which often is exactly what the child wants), leaving her other children unattended.

Do you know that many church nurseries limit the age of the young ones to under five years old, or even three years old? Have you ever volunteered to serve in the nursery? Do you know the name of the teenage girl snapping her gum in the pew behind you? Do you know what is going on in her life, or do you just sit there and stew? Are you glad she is there, or do you wish she were hanging out with her unchurched friends? Have you ever offered to help the mom who comes to church without the aid of the father of her children?

Let's work on building strong families, where God is worshiped at home as well as in church. Then, the behavior in church will follow.

*Roger Rehbein
Oakdale, Minn.*

FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN SIT IN the back pews so they can teach their children proper church behavior without disrupting the service. Making those pews available to young families is a great idea.

Some may think preschoolers

only are making noise, but they also are learning about God and worship. Nearly every time one of the readings matches the Sunday-school lesson, one of my boys will comment about it. Little voices that can join in only on repeated "Alleluias" still make a joyful noise to the Lord.

I thank God that my preschoolers worship in a congregation where they are welcomed. As several people have told me, "We'd rather hear them crying in church than crying in hell."

*Juanita Mair
Mountain View, Wyo.*

ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS OF quieting children I ever saw was by a certain pastor years ago in Des Plaines, Ill. During his sermon, which was interrupted repeatedly by loud and sustained wails from a certain corner of the sanctuary, he stopped and said, "Lady, would you *please* take that child out to the nursery?"

From that point on, to avoid receiving a similar request, most parents hustled their kids out before things got out of hand. The church became quiet again, conducive to hearing the Word and worshiping without excessive disturbance.

If our ushers were trained to do so (and had the courage), a discreet suggestion to parents might bring about similar results without putting the burden on the pastor.

*Rev. Lee A. Butz
Zionsville, Ind.*

'You Are Not Alone'

THE PROFOUND PIECE "YOU ARE NOT Alone" (June–July '05) touches nearly everyone's family. Having taught courses in psychology and deviate behavior, I am convinced that many of us have experience with loved ones who have struggled with depression, schizophrenia, bipolar, and other conditions with roots in possible brain disorders.

The church needs to come to grips with these mental-illness issues, but unfortunately shame, guilt, and stigma have kept them hidden under the congregational radar. "You Are Not Alone" shines much-needed light on the importance of our coming together on this issue.

*Dr. Albert E. Jabs
Lexington, S.C.*

LET ME PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR THE anonymous pastor who was faulted for his presumed lack of ministry to a mentally ill patient. The article said "he didn't feel qualified or comfortable in dealing with mental illness." Though he had visited the cancer-stricken daughter of a congregational family "more than 100 times before she died at the age of 20," when that family's younger daughter became mentally ill, "the same pastor — *then retired and in another state* — said he would pray for them but could offer little else" (emphasis mine).

Though I agree with the article's emphasis on becoming more knowledgeable about mental illnesses, the fact remains that very few pastors have degrees in psychiatry. Would we therefore want them involved in prescribing and administering treatment for these disorders? Isn't the primary responsibility of the pastor the spiritual care of the patient — listening to what the patient has to say, applying God's Word appropriately to the situation, and praying for him or her?

The fact that the pastor in ques-

tion was “retired and in another state” also needs to be considered. Is it appropriate for a former pastor to assume the pastoral responsibilities that have been passed on to another? And can it really be expected that a pastor living in another state should make regular calls on a former parishioner, even as a friend? I think the pastor’s offer to pray for the family was precisely the right response in that situation.

*Rev. Ken Frerking
Columbia, Mo.*

Taken on faith

I THANK MR. COX FOR HIS CREATION-evolution article, “A Matter of Faith” (June–July ’05). He is right on. The creation-evolution debate is all about faith, either faith in naturalism or faith in the Triune God.

To add some gravy to the mix, the preponderance of available evidence supports Creation much more than it does macroevolution. But then again, faith really doesn’t require evidence, does it?

*Dr. Ronnie L. Rivers
Professor Emeritus of Biology
Concordia College, Selma, Ala.*

A sure foundation

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CURRENT SERIES ON the *Book of Concord*. As a former Baptist minister who “converted” to Lutheranism because of its theological content, I have deeply appreciated the historical background these articles have offered. I look forward to future installments with great anticipation.

It is good in the midst of all the stress, doubts, questioning, and struggles of day-to-day, contemporary Christianity to find foundation, strength, and security in the clear, deep, profound, and Biblical words of the *Book of Concord*. These articles have provided this former Arminian Baptist with that sort of sure foundation.

*David R. Mingus
Adrian, Mich.*

LAND OF HARDSHIPS and Miracles

*LCMS missionaries began work in Kyrgyzstan in 1998.
Today, the country's three-year-old Lutheran church body includes 800 people,
a newly ordained pastor, 10 village evangelists, and 15 seminary students.*



Missionary Tim Nickel prays for a Kyrgyz boy in the village of Jal. Nickel, a “late-bloomer” missionary, says the Kyrgyz people are very spiritual, and he is often asked to pray one-on-one for individuals.

by Paula Schlueter Ross

Missionary Tim Nickel says he’s not setting any more goals for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s seven-year-old ministry in Kyrgyzstan, in Central Asia.

He just can’t seem to get them right, so why bother?

Nickel’s first goal, to plant 20 Lutheran congregations in the former Soviet republic by 2010, sounded ambitious enough, he thought. But after a couple of years, a goal of 50 churches looked more realistic.

A few years later, Nickel and his fellow missionaries started to think, “God is doing great things here, and 50 will be easy to reach. We need to make it 100.”

“But now, I think *that’s* a low goal,” he says. “What God is doing in the country is beyond our ability to control.”

What God is doing in Kyrgyzstan is nothing short of miraculous, say Nickel and his wife, Rita, “late-bloomer” missionaries who had no overseas or cross-cultural experience before they decided, in their mid-50s, to accept God’s call to mission service (see sidebar, page 6).

Since they arrived in 1998, the Nickels and another LCMS missionary couple, Rev. Bob and Sue Pfeil, have witnessed the start of 30 “worshipping groups” — 18 are full-fledged congregations.

gations, and 12 are smaller “cell groups” that meet for Bible study and catechism classes.

Most were started not by the missionaries but by Kyrgyz and Russian evangelists and seminary students—10 women and 15 men—who are enthusiastically sharing their newfound faith with their fellow “nationals.” The missionaries train national leaders so that their efforts are multiplied.

“It still amazes me,” says Nickel. “Whatever I’ve dreamed about [doing as a missionary], it’s always too small” in God’s eyes.

“God has exceeded our small expectations,” concurs Sue Pfeil, whose husband, Bob, teaches theology courses. He “is” the seminary for the Concordia Lutheran Church of Kyrgyzstan, the country’s three-year-old national Lutheran church body.

Last December, the missionaries took part in the ordination of the church’s first pastor, Rev. Yakov Mamedov, described by Bob Pfeil as his “best student.”

Mamedov, Pfeil says, “loves to study and learn the Word of God.” He also loves to teach, and Pfeil says he’s praying the new pastor will become “the future trainer of Lutheran pastors in Kyrgyzstan.”

The growth of Christianity in this lush, mountainous land is even more surprising, say the missionaries, when you consider that new believers often are persecuted for their faith.

Less than a fourth of Kyrgyzstan’s 5 million people are Christian, and most of those are Russian Orthodox.

“Anything Christian is anti- their culture, their personality, their race,” says Tim Nickel. In the rural villages, especially, those who show an interest in Christianity are sometimes beaten or disowned by their own families because of community pressure.

“Some of them come [to worship, Bible studies, and other Christian gatherings] anyway,” he says. “There are a lot of people who want to know more about Christ and more about the Bible.”

“God is moving right now in Kyrgyzstan,” says Rita Nickel. “This is a window of opportunity, and the Holy Spirit is working powerfully there.”



LCMS workers know that the “window of opportunity” could close at any time, just as it did briefly last March, when a political coup in the capital city of Bishkek triggered public demonstrations and looting. The Synod’s missionaries were not evacuated, but were advised to “lie low” for a few days as LCMS World Mission monitored the situation. *(Continued on Page 8)*

Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet state, is a young, independent, struggling nation. About the size of Nebraska, it is a mountainous country with very little farmable land and high rates of poverty. While it seems remote and mysterious to Americans, it has long been a link between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. That crossroads diversity is reflected in the faces of these children in Bishkek.



'IF GOD CALLS, YOU GOTTA GO!'

When LCMS World Mission staff called the Nickel household to talk to Tim about his interest in serving as a missionary, his wife, Rita, answered the phone. Tim wasn't home, but she was certain she knew her husband.

"You have the wrong Nickel," she told the caller.

Rita, who laughs about the incident now, didn't know that Tim had responded to a World Mission mailing to pastors, asking them to consider missionary service.

Tim, who was in his 50s and had served as a pastor for 28 years, had been praying for the world's "unreached people" for some time. "There was gradually an awareness that 'maybe you should do something about that yourself' rather than just praying for it," he recalls. "And I thought, 'Maybe I could.'"

The more he thought and prayed about it, the more convinced he became that God was calling him to missionary service, he says.

Rita, however, wasn't so sure. "It was not something I'd ever thought about," she admits, particularly at this time in her life: She had a great job she had worked hard to get. Her youngest child was just starting college. Life was busy. And good.

Tim "was like a wave on a rock," she said, gently but persistently nudging her to reconsider. "Here, fill out these forms," he would say. "Let's pray about it."

Co-workers advised Rita to divorce him. It was "a difficult time," she recalls.

"It took me about a year before I was able to submit to the will of God," she says. "But I did."

Rita attributes her change of heart to "the Holy Spirit. What are you going to do? If God calls you, you gotta go."

How did she know God was calling? "I knew my husband, and we prayed together," Rita said. "I knew. I didn't like it. But I knew."

The Nickels agreed to go to Kyrgyzstan, in Central Asia, to start new work, with the understanding that as "career missionaries" they would stay put for 10 years or more.

"When she told me years ago she would follow me to the ends of the earth, she didn't know it was literal," jokes Tim.

Committing to the move, Rita says she began giving away the contents of their Hamlin, N.Y., home. "People would come in and I would say, 'What do you want [to take]?"

She recalls being in a chaotic, slightly frantic state of mind. "When we were packing, I threw in my 25-year-old, bright-orange Tupperware Jell-O mold," she says. "I had no idea where we were going, no clue what we would be doing, how we would live" or why she might need a plastic Jell-O mold.

To this day, she's never used it, but it's still there, she said. "I look at it occasionally."

"Somebody told us [that] Tim went laughing and skipping, while I went screaming and kicking," laughs Rita.

"But we knew it was God. It really was. And that's what keeps us there."

After seven years, Tim calls mission work "the most rewarding and the most frustrating thing I've ever done."

Rita agrees, and says she is comforted by a comment from another LCMS missionary, who said, "God can write straight on crooked lines."

"And you know, He's taken our crooked lines and He's written straight on them." They've made mistakes aplenty, the Nickels say, but God always provides plenty of successes, too.

Those successes aren't due to "our great planning ability or oratory skills," says Rita, but rather to the Holy Spirit.

When he was first considering overseas mission work, Tim used to picture what it would be like. "I had this vision of a group of people in a little living room, sitting around the floor with their Bibles open, hearing and listening and praying," he says. "And now I've seen that hundreds of times, and it still amazes me."

"This is what we see, and this is what we do, and this is what happens," he says. "This is like the fulfillment of a dream."

This year, LCMS World Mission has commissioned 71 new "long-term" (six months or longer) missionaries for service in 20 countries. All but four of them are volunteers, and a variety of service opportunities are available as teachers, pastors, medical professionals, business managers, and construction workers. The vast majority teach English-as-a-second-language or serve as "relationship builders" in conversational English classes. Requirements for service include active membership in an LCMS congregation and, for most positions, a college degree in any field.

For information on missionary service, visit the LCMS World Mission Web site at www.lcmsworldmission.org or contact a world mission placement counselor at (800) 433-3954 or via e-mail at mission.recruitment@lcms.org.

— P.S.R.



Rev. Tim and Rita Nickel agreed to go to Kyrgyzstan as career missionaries knowing they would be there for 10 years.

(Continued from Page 5)

“We don’t know what the future will bring,” admits Rita, so she and other missionaries work with one thought always on their minds: “We have to work while it’s light.”

So far, that light is burning brightly, as more and more Kyrgyz nationals are responding to God’s Word. Synod missionaries say they have seen miracles among the people. Christianity has “changed lives,” they say, both spiritually and physically.

Broken marriages have turned around. Seriously ill people have been healed. Men have overcome alcoholism.

Perhaps the biggest changes have been seen in those who have chosen to help lead the mission. God helps identify those who serve, says Rita, and He doesn’t pick bankers or lawyers or well-educated men. He chooses “people with simple pasts and dirty, grimy lives that He has taken and redeemed,” she says.

One of the seminary students, she says, spent time in prison. Another was a “drunk” who lost a good job because of alcohol and tried to kill himself.

Of the latter student, she says, “He’s a new creation; he’s redeemed; he’s a totally different person.”

Just as they have seen spiritual and physical changes in the Kyrgyz people, the missionaries have taken both spiritual and physical approaches to their ministry. Besides church planting and leadership training, their work includes providing free medical care and distributing food and clothing to struggling families, orphanages, and the elderly.

Rita Nickel and Sue Pfeil both are registered nurses who reach out to women and children in poor villages, providing healthcare and sharing information about nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Both have spent time on the ministry’s “medical van,” a traveling medical/dental/eyeglass clinic housed in a 53-foot semi-truck trailer.

Emblazoned with a large LCMS logo cross, the Social Charity Fund “Compassion” truck has brought basic medical and dental care to some 120,000 people in 120 villages since it went into service in 1999. If not for the traveling clinic, most of those people would receive no healthcare at all, notes Sue Pfeil.

A Kyrgyz evangelist accompanies the medical truck on its travels, talking to villagers about their needs and looking for opportunities to start evangelistic work.

“We’re meeting physical, emotional, and spiritual needs—all at one time,” Sue Pfeil says. “And honestly, most of the people in Kyrgyzstan need all of that.”

As a public-health nurse in the United States, Rita Nickel says she’s “never seen the amount of tragedy” she sees daily in Kyrgyz families, particularly among the women: “nowhere to live, no food, husband beating you within an inch of your life, and nowhere to go ... so you



A group of women and children wait outside the “Compassion” medical van in October 2004 in the village of Orlovka, Kyrgyzstan. The doctors, dentists, and assistants staffing the 53-foot truck trailer provide the only medical care many of the Kyrgyz people receive.

stay with a man who beats you and brings other women in. You’re helpless.”

But after they hear the Gospel and Jesus enters their lives, “you see that [hopelessness] being lifted,” she says.

Sue Pfeil describes the change as “like a light bulb being turned on. One minute it’s dark in their life and the next minute it’s light. People tell me how content they feel and how happy they feel and how hopeful they feel knowing Christ.”

Of course God is using them, the missionaries say, but He also is using the local people. “Once you get them involved, they get excited, and they go out and tell their friends” about Christ, says Sue Pfeil.

The Gospel message is more effective when people see a change in their neighbors, notes Rita Nickel, and they’re more apt to listen to their friends and relatives than a stranger from America.

Tim Nickel relates a story about a Kyrgyz Christian couple who moved into a village to start mission work. After about a year, the couple did start a Lutheran church. “What we didn’t expect,” says Nickel, was that they also “started three other groups in three nearby villages.”

“I really believe most of the witnessing that these evangelists and pastors do, they just say what happened to them,” he explains. “Christ changes their lives, and they can explain that to other people in their own language.

“And then people come.”



Paula Schlueter Ross is contributing editor of *The Lutheran Witness*

The college years are filled with learning, growing, freedom, and excitement—along with stress, questions, temptations, and decisions. How can the church be there for our students?

ANGUISH AND ASSURANCE ON CAMPUS

by Kim Krull

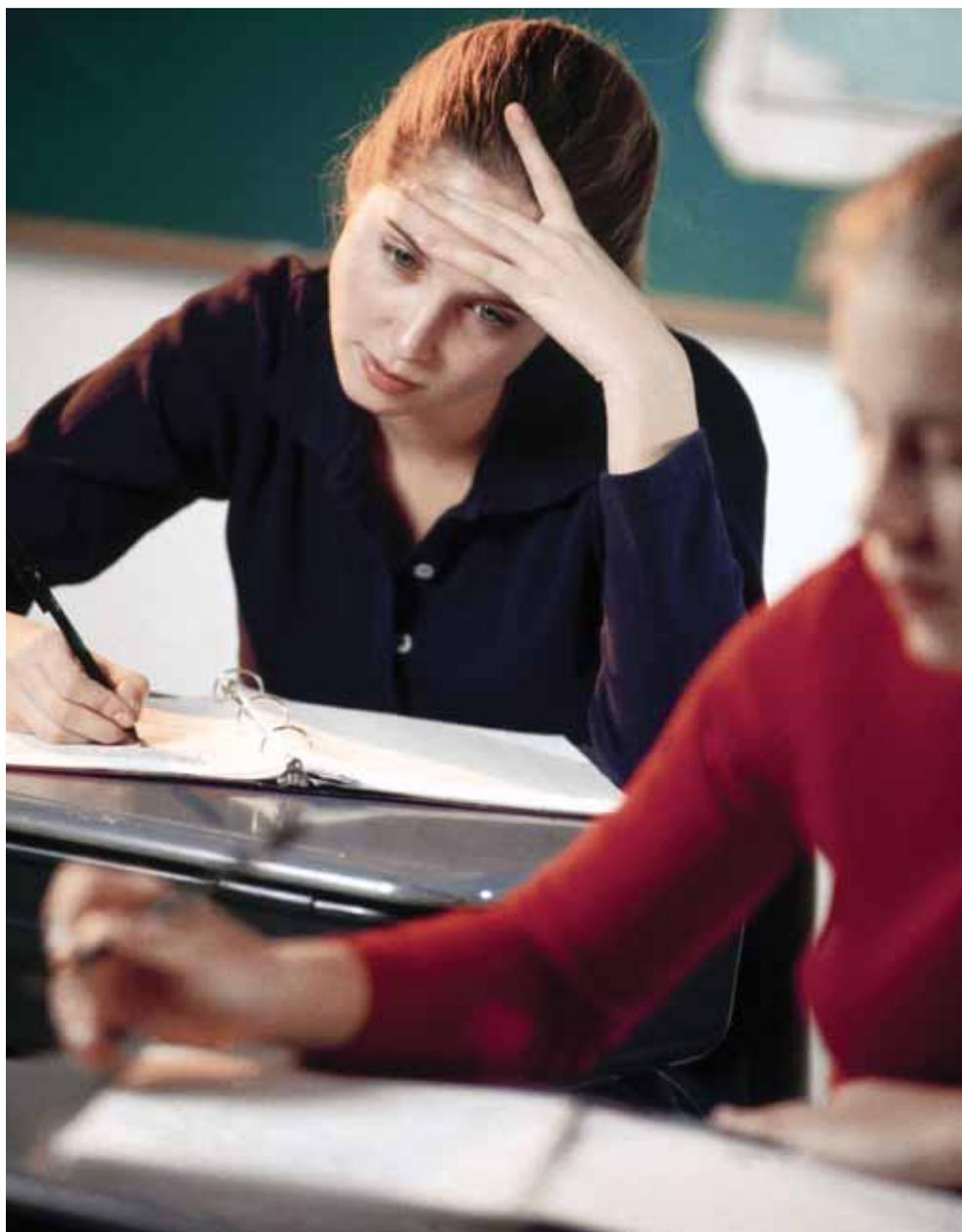
In spring 2004, a University of Wisconsin—Madison (UW) sophomore disappeared for four days, sparking a frantic search covered by the national media.

But fear turned to disbelief when it was discovered that 20-year-old Audrey Seiler had faked her own abduction, later explaining that she needed to “find someplace I could go to clear my head and figure out why I was feeling so down. ...”

That a young woman described as a “model daughter, model student, and star athlete” while growing up in Rockford, Minn., would concoct such a hoax shocked many. But not Rev. Greg Fairow, the LCMS campus pastor who provided spiritual care to the distraught Seiler family and friends during the search.

“The specific details were surprising, but to think that a college student could be hurting so badly that she would do something so desperate did not surprise me,” Fairow said. “As I reflect on nearly seven years in campus ministry and think of the number of students who come to me with extraordinary pain, I recognize that the number I see is only the tip of the iceberg.”

And that’s part of an ironic challenge, says Fairow and other LCMS campus pastors. College is a time





Students at Alleluia Lutheran Church and Student Center, Arizona State University, meet in informal, small-group ministries. These groups are designed to encourage each member to maturity in worship, mutual edification, and evangelism.

when, studies show, an alarmingly high number of young people struggle with serious problems like depression. Those years also are when students face decision-making challenges about sex, alcohol, and drugs as well as choices regarding careers and possible mates.

Unfortunately, this life-shaping period also is a time when an overwhelming number of young adults disconnect from the church.

This life-shaping period also is a time when an overwhelming number of young adults disconnect from the church.

“I’ve heard estimates stating that 75 percent of students who had been active in the church during high school stop when they get to college,” said Rev. Kent Pierce, LCMS campus pastor at the University of Missouri in Columbia and board member of the newly formed Lutheran Campus Mission Association.

That’s disturbing, Pierce says, because college “is a critical time when young people face lots of challenges in our fast-paced world; lots of thoughts and ideas are vying for their attention. It’s at this time,

perhaps more than ever, that they need the strong foundation of Christian faith and lives rooted in Christ’s love and forgiveness.”

Many parents, LCMS campus pastors say, are unaware of the depth and complexity of the problems in the lives of their college-age children. According to statistics from the National Mental Health Association regarding college students, 10 percent have been diagnosed with depression, nearly seven percent reported anxiety disorders, and suicide is their third leading cause of death.

At a time when many are away from family and on their own for the first time, college students face a myriad of social issues and academic pressures. “These are situations ripe for high levels of anxiety, self-esteem, identity, or depression problems,” said Pierce, who often sees one or two students each year who confide that they are struggling with suicidal feelings.

Relationship concerns top the

list of college student problems, including the heartbreak of losing a boyfriend or girlfriend and the consequences of casual sex.

Adults tend to underrate the impact of a broken college romance, Fairrow says. “When you’re older and married and have gone on to encounter larger crises, you look back and don’t remember breaking up as that big a deal in the long run,” he said. “But to a 20-year-old, whose girlfriend or boyfriend left for another, it’s catastrophic.”

Another typical but often underrated problem: pressure from home.

Pierce tells of a student at Kent State University in Ohio, where he previously served as campus pastor. The young man was struggling to match the expectations of his father, a former star college athlete, and also cope with a rocky romance. One night, a worried buddy drove the hurting student to the Luther House on campus where Pierce was leading a Bible study.

“We spent a couple of hours



Students representing Lutheran Campus Ministries of Kent State University meet fellow students at a welcoming booth at The Black Squirrel Festival, the school event to introduce new students to college and community organizations.

talking, and I made a referral for him to get professional counseling,” Pierce said. “When students are feeling such a burden and student

counseling services are backlogged, they can't always wait for that appointment. It's good they can come to a campus ministry."

Students who buck the church "disconnect" trend and get involved with LCMS campus ministries agree.

When he transferred to Arizona State University (ASU) at Tempe last year, Jeff Ross, 21, knew no one and wondered how he would ever make friends who shared his views and beliefs on this sprawling campus of more than 50,000 students.

An Internet search led to his discovery of Alleluia Lutheran Church, the ASU campus ministry. From his first visit, Ross liked Alleluia's "cell church" approach, which offers informal, small-group ministries as well as weekly worship.

Ross, an LCMS member from Farmington Hills, Mich., calls Alleluia "one of the best parts of my life."

"I made some great relationships, grew spiritually, and felt the presence of God in my life like never before," said Ross, adding that serving as a leader apprentice in that campus ministry contributed to his current interest in pursuing professional church work as a career.

"Life changing" is how Stephanie Roberts describes her involvement with the LCMS campus ministry at the University of Wisconsin—Madison.

As a freshman, this LCMS member from Muskego, Wis., struggled with grief and depression over her father's death. Roberts was at her "lowest point emotionally, mentally, and physically" when her mother came for a visit and suggested they worship at Calvary Lutheran Chapel.

During the service, Roberts says, "I truly felt a release as we sat there,



Rev. Kent Pierce enjoys time with some students when he was pastor at Lutheran Campus Ministries of Kent (at Kent State University in Ohio) and nearby Faith Lutheran Church. Now he is campus pastor at the University of Missouri in Columbia, and board member of the newly formed Lutheran Campus Mission Association.

and I know that God had pointed us to Calvary that weekend. I finally felt welcome and safe somewhere; I wasn't alone."

She still faced emotional and academic hurdles, Roberts says, but "I had a great support system now and a place to 'plug' myself into."

Roberts later participated in a Calvary spring break servant event in Mexico. That experience helped her decide to spend her first year after graduation serving as a teacher and missionary in China with LCMS World Mission.

"It's a shame more students don't get involved in campus ministries, because I know there are a lot hurting just like I was."

"It's a shame more students don't get involved in campus ministries, because I know there are a lot hurting just like I was," said Roberts, 22, who recently joined the Navy. "I think that most feel like they are too busy with school or just too overwhelmed to take the time to find a campus church and go to a service."

Which leads to one of the great frustrations of campus pastors: the belief that it's okay—even normal—for students to take a break from church during the college years.

"It's a common myth that after college students sow their wild oats ... marry, [and eventually] return to the church," said Rev. Lee Meyer, LCMS campus pastor at ASU. "That may be true for some, but what about those who never come back?"

And that "never come back" segment may be substantial. According to a 2003 study of "twentysomethings" and Christian churches by the Barna Research Group, church attendance continues to decline in the late 20s, even after most young adults have moved from the campus to the workforce.

The study estimated that eight million people in their 20s who were regular churchgoers as teens will no longer be active in church by their 30th birthday.

That's why campus pastors urge parents, congregations, and districts to help them connect college students to the church during this critical, transitional period.

"People tend to think that just because their sons and daughters were raised in the church, they automatically will get involved in campus ministry," said Rev. Peter Cage, LCMS campus pastor at Ball State University in Indiana. "It's amazing that I can have juniors and seniors, who are members of the LCMS and who finally come to church, tell me they never knew we were here.

We can't reach out to those students unless we know about them," Cage said. (See accompanying story

for tips on connecting students to campus ministries.)

Recalling Audrey Seiler, Pastor Greg Fairow wonders if her unfortunate episode might have been avoided if she could have confided in a trusted campus ministry pastor or a campus ministry friend.

When police found her, the young woman claimed she had been kidnapped. Later, the Seiler family, who are members of an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregation in Rockford, said that depression prompted their daughter's disappearance. News reports suggested that Audrey was overwhelmed by her transfer to a larger school farther away from home, boyfriend problems, and the death of a beloved aunt. She was put on probation, ordered to pay restitution, and began treatment for depression.

Last year, the Seilers invited Fairow to their home. This was the campus pastor's first reunion with Audrey's parents and many family and friends who had assisted in the search. He finally met Audrey, who did not return to UW but has resumed her college career.

"Audrey acknowledged that her faith in the Lord has grown much stronger since the events of last spring," Fairow said. "She recognizes that the Lord has taken that incident and planted seeds of opportunity—not only for her but also for many other people, including many who know her story but have never met her.

"So many college students are hurting and don't feel they have anyone they can talk to," Fairow added. "We want them to know this about campus ministry: we're here for you."



Kim Krull, a freelance writer, is a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Des Peres, Mo.

HOW TO CONNECT YOUR STUDENT WITH A CAMPUS MINISTRY



The Synod has a presence on about one-fourth of the nation's 3,700 colleges and universities, according to the new Lutheran Campus Mission Association (LCMA). Most of these campus ministries consist of a nearby LCMS congregation; full or part-time campus pastors serve others.

These ministries reach out to a variety of young adults, including the growing number of international students. But, ironically, campus pastors say, connecting with students from our own LCMS congregations can be one of their greatest challenges.

They offer the following suggestions to help link your college student with an LCMS campus ministry:

- Contact LCMA to see if your student's school has an LCMS campus ministry. Visit www.lcma.info.
- If the school has a campus ministry church, visit it when you visit the campus. Before school starts, e-mail the campus pastor notifying him that your student is enrolled. Include your student's cell phone number and e-mail address.
- Ask a campus ministry "veteran" to invite your student to worship or an activity. "If students don't come to church within the first three weeks or so, the chance of them coming at another time during the academic year drops dramatically," said Rev. Greg Fairow, campus pastor at the University of Wisconsin—Madison.
- Invite a college student to speak to your congregation's high-school youth group about college life and the benefits of getting involved with a campus ministry.
- Many campus ministries have Web sites. Check for scheduled activities and mention them to your student: "Hey, I noticed there's a movie night coming up that sounds like fun."
- Ask a member of your church to compile the names of your congregation's college students and send their contact information to the appropriate campus ministry. In the South Wisconsin District, for example, the LWML has agreed to do this.
- For more tips and to receive periodic campus ministry updates, visit www.lcma.info. Contact the LCMA at campusmission@yahoo.com.

— K.P.K.

TEAM WORK



Education programs are helping Lutheran laypeople “step up to the plate” and assume greater roles in their congregations and other ministries.

by Marvin Bergmann

“Whoever provides an arena for leadership will find leaders.”

That is exactly what’s happening through the lay-education programs of some 20 LCMS districts, where more than 600 men and women currently are engaged in lay leadership education.

How lay leaders are involved in planting new congregations is described by Rev. Chris Reinke, Western Regional director of Missions for three districts: Northwest, California-Nevada-Hawaii, and Pacific Southwest. Instead of spending \$600,000 to purchase property and call a pastor, 43 congregations have been organized for less than \$100,000 by first engaging lay leaders in small-group Bible study and ministry, networking, and developing “house churches,” which then call a pastor.

Lay leaders going to work

Vern Nemitz of Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church, Omaha, Neb., met

Pastor David Block, who was considering a call to serve as the congregation’s director of ministries. They discovered a mutual interest—outreach ministry. Nemitz sold his bowling alley business and became the director of outreach at Divine Shepherd. During the last six years, this congregation has added 1,000 new members, two-thirds of whom were not previously connected to the faith or to a church.

Today, Nemitz is one of 50 participants in the Lay Leadership Program of the Nebraska District, which offers classes in Norfolk and Seward. Participants come from a variety of occupations: ranchers, farmers, business owners, a former university football coach, homemakers, a nurse, a university administrator, a former University of Nebraska and Green Bay Packer quarterback, teachers, and the manager of a city mission.

These participants say they plan to use their gifts in many ways, including: teaching the Bible, engaging in “bridge” ministries, making visits to care centers and the homebound, children’s ministry, family-life

education, men’s and women’s ministries, youth ministry, prison ministry, church planting, evangelism in “challenge” groups, continuing a mission ministry in Russia, assisting their pastor, serving as elders, doing outreach in small towns and rural communities, serving as deacons, and going “wherever God leads me.”

The curriculum—developed by Synod’s two seminaries and called DELTO (Distance Education Leading To Ordination)—addresses the desire of lay leaders to develop their theological foundation and ministry skills. Courses include: Theology, History, and Literature of the Old Testament; Theology, History, and Literature of the New Testament; The Lutheran Confessions; Interpreting the Scriptures; Mission Outreach in Multicultural Contexts; The Caring Ministry of the Church; Worship in the 21st Century; Proclaiming the Good News; Teaching the Christian Faith; and History of the Church’s Mission.

Pastors, teachers, a pastoral counselor, directors of Christian education, and Concordia University professors teach the courses.

The growing impact of district lay leadership programs is clear. For example, in the Pacific Southwest District, where 125 laity currently are enrolled at 17 locations in Southern California, Nevada, and Arizona,

graduates are involved in more than 40 congregational ministries. Seventy deacons are engaged in Word and service ministries, and a few are serving in Word and Sacrament ministry under supervision of a pastor.

In the Northwest, California-Nevada-Hawaii, and other districts, more than 350 men and women are enrolled in lay-education programs. Lay leaders now serve 126 fishing villages and communities in Alaska, where another 1,000 leaders are needed.

Twenty-nine graduates of the Lay Ministry Training Institute of the Southern District are working in a variety of congregational ministries, and 20 more people currently are enrolled in the program. The Kansas District's program has credentialed more than 50 deacons, most of whom serve as assistants to pastors. In the Iowa West District, a lay-leadership education program offers classes taught by faculty of Concordia University, St. Paul. Some of the graduates now serve in ethnic ministries.

The Michigan, Mid-South, Ohio, Southeastern, Atlantic, and other districts also offer lay-education programs.

Helping fan the flame

Laypeople continue to take on key roles in *Ablaze!*, the international emphasis sponsored by LCMS World Mission that sees every member as a missionary and every congregation as a missionary outpost. Dr. Robert Scudieri, associate executive director of LCMS World Mission and head of the National Mission Team, reports that laity and congregational staffs of 15 districts already have set initial goals to share the Gospel with more than 20 million people and to begin 1,250 new churches.

Dr. Daniel Mattson, associate executive director of LCMS World Mission, says that individuals and congregations will play key roles in a major challenge facing the Synod,

that of expanding cross-cultural missions. Recognizing that a lack of concern for the lost is essentially a spiritual problem, *Ablaze!* emphasizes that changes in the culture of congregations and individuals occur through Word and Sacraments, which lead to sharing the Gospel with ethnic groups on their own terms.

Russell Sommerfeld, president of the Nebraska District, sees *Ablaze!* as a way of addressing a decision confronting many congregations—either change or die a slow death. He adds that the *Ablaze!* movement raises the awareness of congregational members, lay leaders, and ordained and commissioned church workers to define their community, connect with the lives of people, and listen for openings to speak the Gospel of Christ so that the Holy Spirit can lead people to confess their sin and receive freeing forgiveness.

Biblical propriety

Concerns about the Biblical-theological basis of lay involvement in mission and ministry are addressed in a number of ways. For example, the complementary roles of laity, lay leaders, ordained and commissioned workers are seen as a repeated emphasis of the Scriptures. The apostle Peter addressed God's call "to declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9) to the corporate body of believers. The apostle Paul highlighted the ministries of both the people of God and those called by the church to designated servant-leader roles. In the parables, Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God through individual and corporate images.

In the New and Old Testaments, the players on the field clearly are the laity, with "apostles, prophets,

evangelists, pastors and teachers" called to equip players for action. Sacerdotalism—a view that restricts such duties as leading Bible classes and witnessing the Gospel to certain offices—contradicts key Biblical perspectives on mission and ministry.

The significance of equipping laity for their ministries is seen clearly in the church of the first four centuries. As early as A.D. 96, Clement of Rome named bishops, presbyters, and deacons as servants of God's people. Teams of called workers filled various offices in the church rather than one individual "doing it all." As one church historian pointed out, "There is no evidence of a Christian congregation being led by one individual during the early period of the church's existence."

The explosive growth of the church during the first four centuries was chiefly a movement of the laity, inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, equipped by called workers, and focused on compassion ministries of Word and deed, which transformed an empire.

There are many examples of the impact of equipping laity for their



Recent students at the Nebraska District Lay-Leadership Program take a moment for a class picture on the campus of Concordia University—Nebraska in Seward.

ministries. Christians purchased slaves at auctions and then gave them their freedom. Julian, a Roman Emperor, ordered priests in pagan temples to do social work in order to compete with Christians who were

caring for the sick and the poor. During the plagues, Christians often remained to care for the ill while most of the population fled. Missionaries who carried the Gospel throughout the then-known world included unnamed merchants, traders, wives, soldiers, and other laity. Some laity left a legacy by bequeathing one-half of their estates to the work of the Gospel.

Is everyone happy about a renewal of interest in lay leadership? There are concerns. Some think that the preparation of lay leaders may be inadequate. Others worry about a “blurring” of ministry roles. A few call for “shutting down” district lay-leadership education programs.

The contention centers on licensed deacons and their role in Word and Sacrament ministry. Some say that Article 14 of the Augsburg Confession and other confessional writings permit only ordained clergy to engage in Word and Sacraments in any circumstance. Others respond by citing C.F.W. Walther, founding president of the Synod, who taught that the pastoral office is established by God Himself, and in the absence of a

pastor, a Christian can step forward and engage in preaching, Baptism, and absolution, with such acts being as valid as if they were done by Christ Himself (see Walther’s sermon, “The Holy Desire and Duty of All Christians

to Lead Souls to Christ,” the 12th Sunday after Trinity Sunday, 1842). A few respond by saying, “Ordain deacons.”

The role of licensed deacons received attention by a task force appointed by former Synod President Alvin Barry. One result was a resolution passed at the 1989 Synod convention that empowered district presidents to license qualified laity for Word and Sacrament ministry under supervision of a pastor in exceptional circumstances. A resolution of the 2001 convention rescinded a resolution of the 1995 convention that required licensed deacons to complete a seminary program for ordination. The newer resolution authorized districts to continue training lay deacons as directed by the spirit of the 1989 resolution. The 2004 convention approved a resolution to affirm district lay-education programs.



As the Synod seeks to clarify its polity (such as through an upcoming series of conferences called “The Congregation’s Ministry and Mission: Who’s in Charge Here?” sponsored by Synod and districts), possibilities for lay leaders multiply:

1. Equipped lay leaders can assume some pastoral responsibilities, reducing burnout, stress, and loneliness reported by some pastors.
2. With the increasing number of smaller congregations that cannot afford a pastor, lay leaders can be equipped to serve God’s people.
3. Lay people can build on their passion for the Gospel and their people skills in bringing the Gospel to individuals and groups not accessible to congregational staff.
4. Lay leaders can play significant roles in developing “bridge” ministries among ethnic groups, such as mentoring English language classes.
5. Laity can lead ministry teams (different from team ministry) involving younger generations who view organizational structures differently from their elders. (Hierarchies are out; networks are in.)
6. Laity can help to develop new strategies for teaching the faith, such as summer day camps for children and early adolescents. Christ Lutheran Church, Phoenix, involves 1,000 young people in summer on-campus day camps.
7. Pastors, by proclaiming the Word of God, administering the Sacraments, and teaching foundational courses, enable laity to see more clearly their baptismal identity, mission, and ministry in the everyday world.
8. Laity who stand on a solid theological foundation can be better equipped to discuss their faith with Muslims and members of other world religions.
9. Christians equipped to live as “salt” and “light” can make Gospel-motivated responses to social issues like poverty, immorality, crime, searching for spirituality, disease, racism, and terrorism.

As opportunities expand for lay leaders to step up to the plate, “Whoever provides an arena for leaders will find leaders.” What lay leaders seek is permission and support to use their gifts.



Marvin Bergman is the coordinator of the Lay Leadership Program, Nebraska District, and faculty emeritus, Concordia University, Nebraska.

THE DOUBLE CURE

by Armand Boehme

Martin Luther called the Old Testament the “swaddling clothes” of Christ. The early Christians used Old Testament Scripture to witness and evangelize. Jesus Himself taught the disciples all the things “which were written in the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms” concerning Himself (Luke 24:44).

These prophecies about the Messiah remind us that both the Old and the New Testaments testify of Christ (John 5:39).

The hymn “Rock of Ages” speaks about “the double cure” for sin that flowed from Jesus’ side as He died on Calvary’s cross. To better understand this “double cure,” we need to look at both Testaments.

What came from Jesus’ side when it was pierced by the spear?
John 19:34 _____

Why does John emphasize that he saw these two things flow from Jesus’ side?
John 19:35 _____

What is one of the things we are to believe about Jesus, who was both God and man?
1 Cor. 15:3 _____

Is. 53:9 _____

What two elements of atonement from sin were present in the following:

a. The Old Testament sacrifices?
Lev. 1:4–5, 8–9 _____

b. The Great Day of Atonement?
Lev. 16:3, 14–16, 23–28 _____

c. The consecration of the priests?
Lev. 8:6, 15, 23–24 _____

d. The cleansing of lepers?
Lev. 14:1–20 _____

What two elements of atonement are in the waters of purification?
Num. 19:4–5, 9, and 7–22 _____

Why did the person need to be cleansed?
Num. 19:11, 14, 16 _____

What was the penalty for not being cleansed?
Num. 19:13, 20 _____

Why was the penalty so severe? To best answer this, we need to ask: What was the real cause of defilement?
Rom. 5:12; 6:23 _____

As the priests performed the Old Testament sacrifices, what did they sprinkle on the altar of burnt offering?
Lev. 4:7 _____

In between the Tabernacle and Temple was the “Sea.” What did it contain and why was it there?
Ex. 30:17–21; 2 Chron. 4:2–6 _____

Now we can understand why John emphasized blood and water flowing from Jesus’ side. The Old Testament elements of cleansing and atonement from sin came out of Jesus’ side as He died on Calvary’s cross. In the blood and water, we see not only the truth that in Christ, God died for our sins, but we also see the



blessed results of His death. The sin of the world has been atoned. Salvation is ours by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

How does Jesus’ atoning work come to sinners to save them today?

How does Jesus come to us in water today?
Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 8:36 _____

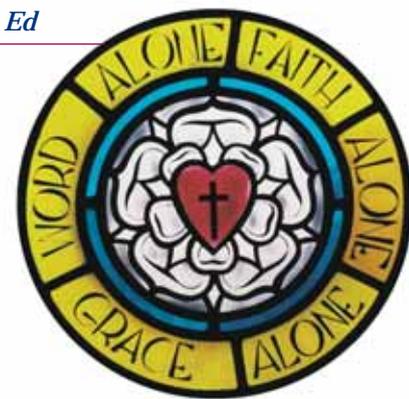
How does Jesus come to us today in blood?
Matt. 26:27–28 _____

As these atoning elements are applied to us in faith, what do we receive?
Matt. 26:28; Acts 2:38 _____

Still today, blood and water are God’s atoning elements that grant penitent sinners the gift of faith, pardon for their sins, and assurance of eternal life in the promised land of heaven. As Jesus comes to us in the waters of Baptism and with His body and blood in the Lord’s Supper, we are being cleansed in Christ’s “double cure” for sin, and shall share in His resurrection glory for eternity.



Rev. Armand J. Boehme is serving at People of God Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, Almaty, Kazakhstan.



LUTHER'S 'LAST STATEMENT'

Luther wrote the Smalcald Articles for a general council called by the pope. They are his personal expression of faith.

by Dieter Reinstorf

Martin Luther regarded the Smalcald Articles as his last will and testament. Expecting his own death in the near future, he wrote: "I have decided to publish these articles so that, if I should die before a council meets ... those who live after me may have my testimony and confession ... to show where I have stood until now and where by God's grace, I will continue to stand."

Genuine Lutheranism

In mid-1536, Pope Paul III called for a general council of the church to meet at Mantua, Italy, in May 1537. It soon became clear that the purpose of the council was not to arbitrate questions of doctrine and practice but rather to stamp out the "poisonous, pestilential Lutheran heresy."

While some Lutherans expressed reservations about receiving the papal emissary delivering the invitation, Luther continued voicing his

strong desire for a council. He expressed the need for a clear confession of faith so that those still held captive by falsehood could distinguish between error and truth.

In December 1536, the elector of Saxony, John Frederick, instructed Luther to prepare a statement indicating the articles of faith in which concessions might be made and those in which no concessions could be made.

Near the end of December, Luther submitted a draft to his colleagues

THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY

As a means of consolidating his power over the German states, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V tried to establish religious accord between the reform-minded Lutherans and the Roman church. But the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 failed to accomplish his goals. (See the June/July issue's "The Augsburg Confession.")

At the conclusion of the diet, Charles rejected the Lutherans' Augsburg Confession, endorsed the Roman position, and demanded that the reformers return to the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church by April 1531.

The princes who supported Luther feared that Charles might impose his will through military action. They met in Smalcald, Germany, in 1531 to form a defensive league to counter any imperial plans to forcefully re-integrate Lutherans into the Catholic fold.

But Charles faced other issues. The Ottoman Turks occupied most of southeastern Europe and threatened the city of Vienna. His lifelong French nemesis, Francis I, also kept Charles too occupied to deal with German reformist ideas.

The reforms of Luther continued to take hold.

Finally, in 1536, Pope Paul III called for a general council to address issues confronting the church, including the ongoing disputes in Germany.

John Frederick, Luther's prince and protector, asked the Reformer to draft a statement that could be read before the council as a summary of the Lutheran position.

Today, we know Luther's statement as the Smalcald Articles.

For political reasons, Lutherans had not addressed the authority of the pope at the Diet of Augsburg. Now the issue needed immediate attention. Philip Melancthon wrote *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*.

In this installment of our *Book of Concord* series, we look at Luther's statement and Melancthon's treatise.

in Wittenberg for review, and the first signatures were affixed to the document at that time.

Seeking wide-ranging consensus, the elector presented the articles to the Smalcald League on Feb. 8, 1537. However, the hope that the league would endorse Luther's articles was never realized. This was partly because Luther was ill and could not attend the meeting and partly because Philip Melancthon argued that the articles would precipitate doctrinal disputes among the league members.

Despite not being officially endorsed at Smalcald, the articles gained favor in later years as a witness to genuine Lutheranism, giving expression to the heart of Martin Luther—for whom the articles were a very personal expression of faith—and as such were incorporated into *The Book of Concord*.

By grace, through faith

The Smalcald Articles are grouped into three parts. Part I treats the divine majesty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This part is short, as it refers to teachings where there were no matters of dispute.

Part II discusses the office and work of Jesus Christ. It contains the principal teachings of Lutheranism. The first of four articles, "Christ and Faith," proclaims salvation by grace through faith alone as a free gift from God. It is hailed as the central article on which everything "we teach and practice" rests. The remaining articles address the mass, chapters and monasteries, and the papacy, condemning unequivocally all man-made traditions as necessary works to merit God's grace.

Part III lays out 15 articles on which Lutherans might make concessions. Strikingly, these do not address trivial matters but rather issues such as sin, the law, repentance, the Gospel, Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, and the Keys and Confession.

Concessions, however, would only be possible when discussed with "learned and sensible men, or even among ourselves," based on the careful exposition of Scripture.

Confessing boldly

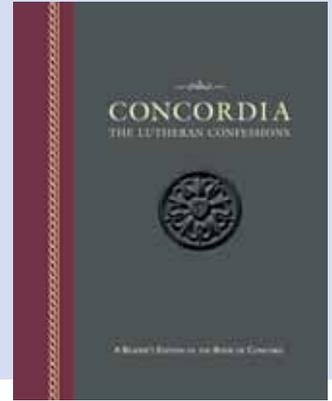
For Lutherans, the Smalcald Articles are a classic example of what it means to confess Lutheran self-understanding. Central to that understanding and the Christian faith is the article of justification ("Christ and Faith"), where no concession can be made. But notably in all other aspects of teaching, including sin and the sacraments, Luther remains remarkably open and conciliatory to those who are prepared to engage on the basis of Scripture.

NEW, PLAIN-ENGLISH BOOK OF CONCORD

Concordia Publishing House has introduced a new edition of *The Book of Concord* in celebration of the 425th anniversary of its original publication.

Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, written in modern English and designed especially for laity with annotations, notes, introductions, reading guides, charts, graphs, and illustrations to help readers understand the importance and meaning of the Lutheran Confessions.

To learn more about this 800-page, hardbound edition, visit www.cph.org/concordia, or call (800) 325-3040. Ask for item #53-1131LCF.



Lutherans confess boldly, but also humbly, continually striving toward confessional agreement and unity within the Church of Christ. Such clear confession is not terminated by adversity, but is spoken for the sake of future generations.

FREE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD IN SOUTH AFRICA

was started in 1892 by descendants of German missionaries and the farmers and craftsmen who accompanied them. It has congregations in all the country's major cities and ministers in three languages: German, English, and Afrikaans. It has approximately 2,600 members.

LUTHERAN CHURCH IN KOREA (LCK)

began as a result of mission work by The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod and officially organized as a national church in 1971, with five congregations. Since then, the LCK has grown to 35 congregations with about 3,000 baptized members. It aims to have 50 congregations by its 50th anniversary in 2008.



Dr. Dieter Reinstorf is a vice president of the Free Evangelical-Lutheran Synod in South Africa and pastor of Evangelical Lutheran St. Thomas Congregation, Cape Town.

For political reasons, Lutherans had not taken on the subject of the pope's authority in Augsburg. Now the truth needed to be told.

CONFRONTING THE POWER OF THE POPE

by Jin-Seop Eom

The Smalcald League, at its February 1537 meeting, organized a commission to write a statement about the power of the pope. Because Luther was ill, the task of drafting the statement fell to Philip Melancthon. He produced a bold treatise that the league approved as a supplement to the earlier Augsburg Confession and Apology of the Augsburg Confession.

The treatise responds to claims that (1) the bishop of Rome by divine right is above all bishops and pastors, (2) the Bishop of Rome by divine right possesses both swords—i.e., both spiritual and temporal authority—and (3) it is necessary for salvation to believe these things, and for such reasons the bishop of Rome calls himself the vicar of Christ on earth.

These claims, the treatise states, are “false, impious, tyrannical, and ruinous to the church.”

The first claim, the treatise asserts, is disproved by the testimony of Scripture and by early church history. Further, the Biblical arguments Rome employs to justify the primacy of the pope have a broader significance than simply being related to popes.

Melancthon and his fellow Lutherans rejected the second claim because Christ did not give His apostles power over the kingdoms of this world. They rightly pointed out that the exercise of this power had “brought a horrible darkness upon the church” and had obscured faith and the cause of Christ.

Finally, contrary to the third claim, Scripture and the canons teach disobedience, not obedience, to heretical popes.

The treatise also explained why the pope carried the marks of the Antichrist (or “an adversary of Christ,” 2 Thess. 2:3–4). The pope wrongly claimed for himself a three-fold divine authority: (1) the right to change the doctrine of Christ, (2) the jurisdiction over souls not only in this life but also after this life, and (3) an authority above the decisions of councils and the whole church.

Usurping authority

The second part of the treatise deals with the power and jurisdiction of bishops. The Roman distinction between bishop and pastor is not by divine right. The tasks of preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments, and exercising jurisdiction belong to all who preside over the churches—pastors as well as bishops.

The treatise dismisses the Roman claim that bishops have the exclusive right to ordain pastors and exercise jurisdiction over excommunication. (Both “rights” often invited abuse, the reformers noted.)

Because of their impious doctrines, their tyrannical exercise of authority, and their corruption, the treatise states that evangelical churches should not recognize bishops who are adherents of the pope.

The treatise was, as Melancthon noted, a sharp condemnation of papal usurpation of authority.



Paul III was pope from 1534 to 1549, including the last years of Martin Luther's life.

In God's purpose

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope gives us great freedom concerning forms and structures of ordained ministry as long as these serve the Gospel. This freedom allows the creation of new forms of ministry in response to the needs of society. Further, the treatise encourages us to consider the ordained ministry as grounded in God's saving purpose. It is part of God's intention to realize this saving purpose through outward means.



Dr. Jin-Seop Eom is an instructor at Luther Theological Seminary, Shingal, Korea, of the Lutheran Church in Korea.

ONE MISSION, ONE MESSAGE, ONE PEOPLE



When St. John (Amelith) Lutheran Church in Bay City, Mich., faced an accumulated deficit of \$116,000 last year, the congregation's leaders decided to deal with it differently than on previous occasions.

Rev. Stephen Starke, the congregation's pastor, tells the story in the February/March 2005 issue of *Michigan In Touch*, a magazine published by the Synod's Michigan District.

"Many congregations like St. John struggle with annual deficits, which hinder the ministry of the parish. Energy and attention go from the mission of the church and the message of the Gospel to money matters," Pastor Starke writes.

"In the past, members (active and inactive alike) were approached face-to-face and door-to-door and encouraged to contribute to remove such deficits," he continues. Past deficits always returned, though, so the congregation's Stewardship Committee decided on a new approach.

Writes Pastor Starke: "Taking their cue from Synod's '**One Mission, One Message, One People**,' they designated [the Sundays of] October 3 as 'One Mission' (a former pastor and missionary was the guest preacher), October 17 as 'One Message,' and October 31 as 'One People.' The goal was to focus on the *mission* of the Church and *message* of the Gospel and to unite as a parish around these two focuses and remove the deficit for *their* sake—for the *sake* of the Church's mission and for the sake of the Gospel message."

The article goes on to describe specific steps, decisions, and actions taken by congregation leaders that achieved a greater sense of oneness in Christ by "celebrating the mission of Christ and the message of the Gospel."

One of the activities included a focus on debt reduction, which concluded on Reformation Sunday, Oct. 31. "When the special envelopes were counted over \$156,000 was received! ..." Pastor Starke writes. "Needless to say, the people of St. John were overjoyed. They came together as 'One People' and, by God's grace and under His great blessing, they not only reduced, but completely *removed* the accumulated deficit. The parish is now free once again to focus on the mission and the message."

Pastor Starke concludes his article with Eph. 3:20–21: "*Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*"



Last year's Synod convention commended the *One Mission, One Message, One People* vision, noting that Synod leaders have used it "to encourage our entire church body toward a stronger zeal for mission outreach, evangelical confession, and efforts to achieve peace and concord in our midst." The convention resolved to "endorse and respond enthusiastically to this appeal, encouraging our brothers and sisters throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to do the same."

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I pray that your congregation will respond to the exemplary leadership demonstrated by congregations such as St. John in Bay City, Mich., focusing your efforts and resources on *One Mission, One Message, One People*:

- **One Mission—To Seek the Lost for Christ**
- **One Message—Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World**
- **One People—United by God's Love in Christ Jesus**

God's grace, mercy, and peace be with you all!

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