

# W *The Lutheran* WITNESS

JANUARY 2003

VOL. 122 NO. 1

## Can War Be Just?

Also:

*The James Ossuary*

*From Michigan  
to East Africa*



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# The Lutheran WITNESS

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

JANUARY 2003

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Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images



Photo courtesy Scott Yakimow

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Official periodical of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through the Board for Communication Services, Dr. Martin G. Schramm, chairman; Rev. J. Thomas Lapacka, executive director.

Staff: Rev. David L. Mahsman, executive editor; Don Folkemer, managing editor; Joe Isenhower Jr., news editor; Paula Schlueter Ross, contributing editor; John Krus, senior designer; Darla Broste, marketing manager; Pam Burgdorf, coordinator; Marcy Hanewinkel, advertising sales; Carla Dubbelde, editorial manager, district editions; Karen Higgins, editorial assistant; editorial office: 1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; (314) 965-9917, Ext. 1228.

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Published monthly by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. Individual subscription \$18.48 per year. Organized congregation subscriptions and district editions offered at reduced rate if submitted through local churches. Standard A postage paid at St. Louis, MO.

For subscription information or address changes,  
e-mail: [cphorder@cph.org](mailto:cphorder@cph.org)

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1-888-THE LCMS (843-5267) [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)  
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Member: Associated Church Press  
Evangelical Press Association

January 2003 (ISSN: 0024-757X) Vol. 122, No. 1

Cover photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images

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# Letters

## A dollar (per member) short

The recent news about the budget for missions suggests that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is forgetting the dedication of our foreparents in taking God's message of mercy and grace to the world.

Stuart Oberheu  
St. Louis, Mo.



I AM APPALLED THAT THE SYNOD'S OVERSEAS MISSIONS—one of the really bright spots within our church body in recent years—faces a \$2 million to \$3 million cut ("National News," Dec. '02).

That amounts to about one dollar per member, two cents a week.

Despite a sluggish economy, we are the richest nation in the history of the world, and American Lutherans share in that prosperity. Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Something is radically wrong; our sense of mission is truly pathetic, if in our abundance, we cannot find it within our hearts even to come up with that missing dollar.

We speak of our fidelity to the Word, yet we ignore the clear words of Jesus about money, the Great Commission and the Great Command.

Surely all of us need to pray fervently for the heart and mind of Christ.

Rev. Arthur Simon  
Colmar Manor, Md.

*Synod mission leaders have been forced to cut spending because anticipated contributions and other funding for the first three months of the fiscal year that began July 1 fell short by some \$1.6 million, not because of a budget cut. Mission officials attributed the shortfall to*

*the economy—donors don't have as much to contribute—and to the current controversy in the Synod. Other Synod officials say, however, that there is no evidence that the controversy has contributed to the funding shortfall. — Ed.*

## Shocked

REV. LUTHER T. ENGELBRECHT MADE this comment about Dr. Gene Edward Veith, who wrote "What Hath Terror Wrought?" in the September issue: "Veith seems to view Muslims and Islam from his own perceptions as a Christian" ("Letters," Nov. '02). From what other "perception" can a Christian possibly view any other religion? I'm shocked that a Lutheran pastor could think such a thought, let alone voice it!

Gene Ockrassa  
Sequim, Wash.

SOMEONE (I DON'T REMEMBER WHO) is reported to have observed that some ideas are so silly only an intellectual would believe them. Possibly we are seeing an example of that truism here.

Leonard C. Johnson  
Moscow, Idaho

## Clearly Biblical

THE ARTICLE ON CLONING, "WHAT CHILD IS THIS?" (Sep. '02), was excellent! Please consider condensing other

documents from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations in *The Lutheran Witness*. We need clear Biblical teaching on these matters!

Sue Hasselbring  
Serowe, Botswana

## Truly inspiring

"FROM COTTON TO COLLEGE" (OCT. '02) is a truly inspiring story! Dr. Julius Jenkins and Rev. Moses Clark are to be commended—Dr. Jenkins for his dedication to the students and the future of Concordia College, Selma, Ala., as one of the premier educational institutions of our Synod; and Pastor Clark, who was willing to pick cotton in order to recruit Dr. Jenkins for the work of the church. Thank you for their story!

Rev. L.E. Delgehausen  
Gonzales, La.

## The Crusades (again)

PLEASE PERMIT A FEW ADDITIONAL comments to those of Rev. Arnie Voigt on the situation in the Middle East ("Letters," Nov. '02).

Tens of millions of fundamentalist Christians who falsely believe that the Jews are God's "chosen people" and have a divine right to geographical Israel are the driving force behind the ongoing Palestinian/Israeli conflict and are undermining any efforts of Middle East peace. They are reminiscent of the Christian knights, kings and popes who a millennium ago led the bloody crusades against the Turks with the cry, "*Dieu le veult!*"—"God wills it!" To say that supporting Israel is necessarily being obedient to God is "*Dieu le veult!*" all over again.

As Christians, we should never lose sight of this basic concept: All believers in Christ—whether Jew, Gentile or Arab—are the true heirs by grace of (spiritual) Israel, not of a physical location on the

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Mediterranean. And pray unceasingly for the suffering Palestinians (Muslim and Christian), who are the forgotten people.

*Catherine Bridgman  
Palmyra, Mo.*

### **Bad choices**

MY HUSBAND AND I READ *THE LUTHERAN Witness* from cover to cover every month. One section that we sometimes do not enjoy is “Shedding Some Light.” Usually I let the jokes I cannot find humorous pass by, because we get a real chuckle out of most of them. But I must say that “Favorite hymns” (Aug. ’02)—from the dentist’s “Crown Him with Many Crowns” to the shopper’s “Sweet By and By”—not only is tasteless, but in my opinion denigrates the intent and purpose of these fine hymns. I hope that in the future more careful screening is done by those responsible for jokes published in the official magazine of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

*Harriet T. Pierce-Ruhland  
Keswick, Va.*

YOUR TOPIC SELECTION FOR THE AUGUST “Family Counselor” was ill-advised. With all the bad press the Roman Catholic Church is experiencing over its clergy and sexual misconduct, you did not have to run an item stating that “a recent *Focus on the Family* article estimates that about one in five pastors has a problem in the area of pornography.” While pornography is an addiction that needs to be addressed, the article could have been just as effective without identifying the writer’s spouse as a “pastor/husband” and the therapist’s responding with a reference to pastors. Our pastors need to be built up and encouraged without having suspicion cast on them. We need to remember the Eighth Commandment and Luther’s injunction about putting “the best construction on everything.”

*William W. Hessler  
Bridgeport, Mich.*



# CAN WAR BE JUST?

*Once again, the prospects of war  
cause Christians to look beyond  
their own reasoning for answers.*

by John F. Johnson

**A**s the leaders of our nation, as well as those of other countries, seemingly lay the groundwork for possible war with Iraq, thoughtful Christians are again turning their attention to the issue of war and peace as a theological matter in its widest sense and not merely as a political issue or a concern of only statesmen, diplomats, soldiers and sociologists.

To be sure, Christians do not, merely by being Christians, have any inside track on the “specifics” of political action or peacemaking. Prayer and piety do not in and of themselves produce a sound course of political action. However, centuries of debate and discussion have led to the acceptance of the “just war” concept as the guiding moral theory with which the church has wrestled in dealing with war and peace throughout its history.

Now, once again, developments on the international stage push the central tenet of this position to the fore—engagement in warfare under certain conditions may be morally acceptable; under certain other conditions, it may not be.

## Two historical extremes

The just-war tradition has commonly been distinguished from two other ethical options espoused by individual Christians. The first is pacifism; the second is the “crusade.”

Pacifism has a long history in Christian thought. Pacifists are convinced that Christ condemned all forms of violence. Appeal is made to such Biblical passages as Matt. 26:52 (“All who draw the sword will die by the sword”); Matt. 5:39 (“If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”); and Luke 6:27 (“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you”), in which Jesus commands meekness and peacemaking. Thus, argues the pacifist, if true followers of Christ are genuinely called to imitate their Master and follow His example, they cannot sanction military service as a combatant.

Some historians contend that pacifism was the universal position held in the Christian church during its first 150 years of existence. For example, the second-century apologist Justin Martyr said that Christians would gladly die for a righteous cause but would refrain from making war on their enemies.

During the Middle Ages, absolute pacifism as the genuine practice of the Gospel was championed by various sectarian groups. It eventually culminated in the so-called “radical reformation” of the Anabaptists in the 16th century. The Anabaptists repudiated *all* forms of political or secular activity as intrinsically contrary to the Gospel. They believed that the church should be a disciplined community in direct reliance on the Holy

Spirit. The ethic of nonviolence was an integral part of their confession of faith. The “peace churches,” such as the Quakers and Mennonites, continue to hold this view.

The crusade idea also has its roots in Christian history, especially in the crusade movements of the 11th and 12th centuries. The crusade is war on God’s behalf, or “holy war.” As do the pacifists, supporters of this view appeal to the Bible, primarily the Old Testament record of God’s people at war—such episodes as the inhabitants of Canaan being exterminated to make way for the possession of their land, or Joshua meeting a stranger with a drawn sword before the walls of Jericho.

However, in its more contemporary manifestation, the crusade idea refers less to a “holy war” and more to a preventive war that is not initiated in response to a specific act of aggression, but in anticipation of one or the attempt to make right a past act of aggression.

Over the centuries, the vast majority of Christians came to identify significant theological and Biblical problems with both pacifism and the crusade idea. Pacifism may indeed represent the courage of faith in a situation of persecution. At the same time, it may also amount to a rejection of the message of the righteousness of God by faith and allow the abandonment of the world to evil. On the other hand, the crusade position actually asserts the dominance of the church over the world and tends to confuse God’s initiative with a human will to power.

While developments in international law and historic political judgment have also contributed to the evolution of the just war theory, in specifically Christian usage this position is as old as the fourth century when St. Augustine formulated it. He amalgamated the Greek and Roman teachings of Plato (who discussed the “rules of war”) and Cicero (who connected war with moral law) with an interpretation of Scripture. His concepts are, by and large, those that have served large segments of Christendom to this day in discussing the justice of participating in warfare.

The foundation for his view was the condition of fallen humanity. War was both a consequence of sin and a remedy for it. Although Augustine acknowledged that sin originated in the corrupt will of people rather than in their actions, when the evil will led to sinful acts, war provided a punishment.

This general notion led Augustine to posit a series of specific points that became part and parcel of just-war thinking: war was to be waged in order that peace might prevail. A good ruler will not initiate wars of aggression or conquest. No wanton violence or mas-

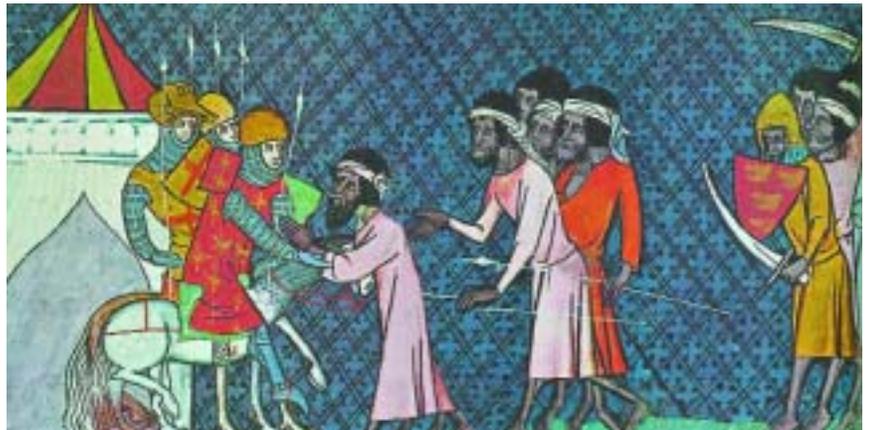
sacre should be committed. A war must be undertaken under proper authority.

The next notable contribution to the Christian just-war tradition came from Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. He followed the path of Augustine to a great extent, but also extended the discussion to include the legitimacy of revolt against tyrannical government. If a tyrant violates the natural law on which authority rests, it is legitimate for those next in authority to use force against the tyrant for the common good.

## Lutheran view

The “just war” position is Protestant as well as Roman Catholic. It is inconceivable that Martin Luther did not know it or that he was not affected by it. Moreover, the concept is prominent in the writings of 17th-century orthodox Lutheran fathers such as Martin Chemnitz and Johann Gerhard.

While the Lutheran confessional writings do not treat the subject of war at length, they do contain significant references to it (for example, in Luther’s commentary on the Lord’s Prayer in the *Large Catechism*, in Article 21 of the *Augsburg Confession*, and in Article 4 of *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*).



*Over the past two millennia, Christians have reacted to international threats with every approach from the “holy wars” of the crusades to absolute pacifism.*

Most important, perhaps, is the specific reference to just wars in Article 16 of the *Augsburg Confession*: “Christians may without sin ... engage in just wars, serve as soldiers. ...” Lutheranism inherited the just-war doctrine. For Lutherans, of course, its theological foundation lies in the analysis of the Christian’s life in “two kingdoms.” This teaching was based on the tension between Christ’s rejection of violence in the Sermon on the Mount and those passages in Scripture that admonished obedience to secular governments (Rom. 13:1–2; 1 Peter 2:13–14).

For Luther, God ordained the *spiritual kingdom* by

which the Holy Spirit produces righteous people under Christ, and He also ordained the *temporal kingdom* by which wicked are restrained and outward peace maintained. “No Christian,” Luther wrote, “shall wield or invoke the sword for himself and his cause. On behalf of another, however, he may and should wield it and invoke it to restrain wickedness. ...”

## Ethical framework

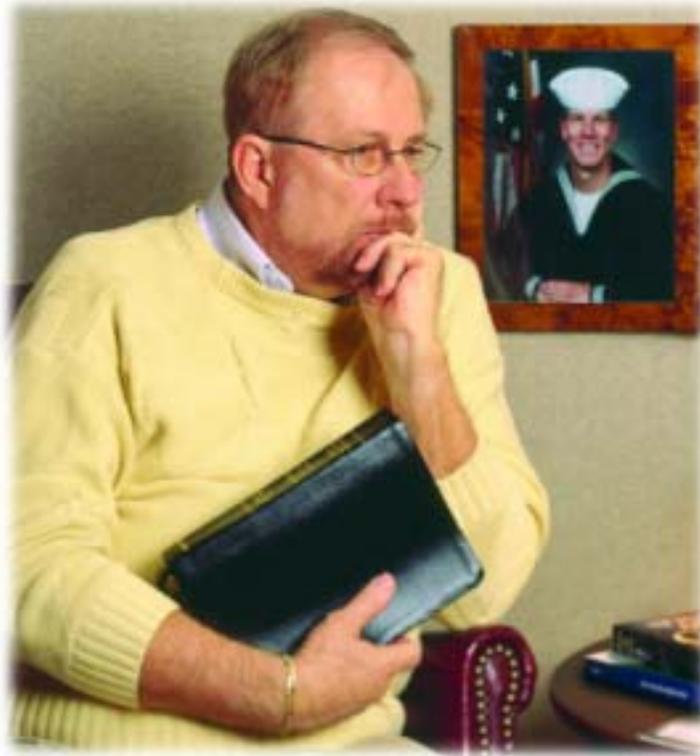
The cumulative effect of Christian thinking on the just war throughout the centuries has been the formulation of specific criteria for the application of justice to warfare. The precise list of these criteria vary, but in its most essential form, the classical just-war doctrine involves seven points which can be grouped into two categories—one governing the choice to go to war and the other governing proper actions during war.

The criteria relating to the justification for going to war are:

**Just cause.** The right to self-defense against an aggressor has consistently been regarded as fundamental. Only defensive war is legitimate.

**Last resort.** War may be waged only when all negotiations and compromise have been attempted and have failed. In his “Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount,” Luther remarks that “anyone who claims to be a Christian and a child of God, not only does not start war or unrest; also he gives help and counsel on the side of peace wherever he can, even though there be a just and adequate cause for going to war.”

**Formal declaration.** Since the use of military force is the prerogative of government and not of private individuals, properly constituted procedure for declaring and waging war must be followed. As Thomas Aquinas commented, “it is not the business of a private individual to declare war ... as the care of the common weal is committed to those who are in authority.”



*As menacing international developments cause anxiety, Christians need to prayerfully consider when engagement in warfare may be morally acceptable, and when it may not.*

**Just intention.** War must be carried out to secure a just peace, not for territorial conquest, economic gain, or ideological supremacy. The only legitimate intention of war is to secure peace.

The criteria relating to just conduct in the midst of war are:

**The principle of proportionality.** The weaponry and force used should be limited to what is needed to secure a just peace

and attain better conditions after the conflict than existed prior to it. (The Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard took up the question of the use of cannon balls and said that they should not be approved because of the extensive damage they cause.)

**The principle of discrimination.** Since war is an official act of government, noncombatants and civilians should be immune from attack.

**The principle of limited objectives.** Since the purpose of a just war must ultimately be peace, unconditional surrender or the complete obliteration of the social or political institutions of a nation is unwarranted.

Taken together, these benchmarks of a just war have been considered an important ethical framework for implementing the Christian vocation in a sinful world in which armed conflict has been a common recourse for nations and continues to be so today as well.

The just-war concept has been in and out of vogue through the years. Critics have noted that while theologians have endeavored to give Scriptural content to the abstract term, “justice,” like beauty, it is very much in the eye of the beholder. Who defines “just” in just war? Some believe the just-war doctrine has been employed as a rationalization of every war in which Christians have found their nations engaged.

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## Today's questions

What does it mean to have a just war in an era of "weapons of mass destruction"? Can a nuclear war be a just war?

Weapons of mass destruction have reversed the customary procedure for deliberating the justifiability of war. Traditionally, one began with the just cause, then proceeded to the other criteria of the just war theory, such as just means. The prospect of weapons of mass destruction has drawn the means of war into the forefront. If nuclear or biological or chemical warfare cannot fit the just war criteria of just means, then the justifiability of *any* war with such weapons is called into serious question.

Finally, current discussions of an unprovoked "first strike" against another country challenge the application of the historic just-war doctrine. In recent weeks, one group of American Roman Catholic bishops expressed to President George Bush serious reservations about the ethical legitimacy of preemptive use of military force to overthrow the government of Iraq. At the same time, a statement issued by "conservative, evangelical" Christian leaders issued a statement that a first strike against Iraq was consistent with the "time-honored" criteria for just war.

Is severely menacing behavior acceptable as a legitimate basis for initiating an act of self defense?

As challenging and complicated as such questions may be for the Christian today, one thing is clear. Never is the issue whether war is good or not! The issue is whether war is in all cases entirely avoidable.

As Lutheran Christians, we should remember that we are called to responsible service "in" the



*The use of military force is the prerogative of government following properly constituted procedure for declaring and waging war. Recently, U.S. President George W. Bush explained his plan for the Middle East as National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld listened.*

world, politically and militarily, for the sake of others. We should pray for wisdom, and especially for those in positions of governmental authority. We should be willing to discuss issues of war and peace with others and listen carefully to a variety of viewpoints. We should encourage avenues of peaceful conflict resolution. We should pray

called for the twice-ringing of the church bells to be retained. The people are to be instructed that it is not done to tell the time of the morning or the time when workers in the fields are to go home at night. Rather, said Luther, "the ringing of the bells is done as an exhortation to intercession, particularly for peace." The people are to be

*C*urrent discussions of an unprovoked "first strike" against another country challenge the application of the historic just-war doctrine.

instructed in what a wonderful and precious thing peace is. "The orderly process of the law, all discipline, and the service of God perish in time of war. For that reason we should plead with God daily not to

punish us with the scourge of war."

Even the realism of the Christian just-war tradition does not diminish for us the fervency of that petition.

for peace and have a passion for peace. And above all, we should remember that the Gospel is the promise that our destiny with God is His own free gift of grace in Jesus Christ and not our own works which, among so many other things, liberates us from the illusion that any political or military actions may be unambiguous and righteous.

In his "Instructions of the Visitors" in 1528, Martin Luther



*Dr. John F. Johnson is president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.*

## Missouri Synod mission board trims St. Louis staff

In an effort to “live within its means” in light of declining revenue, LCMS World Mission last month eliminated 17 positions from its St. Louis-based staff.

The layoffs reduce the size of the mission board’s International Center staff from 55 to 38 — a reduction of nearly one-third.

The cuts were made to offset a shortfall of some \$1.6 million in contributions and grants during the first quarter of the fiscal year that began July 1 and expectations that immediate future revenues also will be less than projected.

LCMS World Mission also had plans to notify at least 20 “missionary units,” individuals or families on the mission-board payroll who serve in overseas fields, that their positions also are being eliminated. More specific information was not yet available at press time.

About 100 missionary units — and more than 100 volunteers — currently serve LCMS World Mission or its partners in 68 countries.

In a Dec. 2 letter to missionaries explaining the staff reductions, Executive Director Robert Roegner

said LCMS World Mission was faced with cutting some \$3 million from its current \$29 million budget, and an additional \$6 million from the spending plan proposed for the 2003–04 fiscal year.

“Please note that this is not a problem of overspending our spending plan,” Roegner told missionaries. “We have done a great job of staying within our spending plan. Rather, it is a problem of not enough revenue coming in to support our approved spending plan.”

Eliminated in St. Louis were 11 full-time posi-

tions and five part-time positions, which included three retirements and one voluntary resignation. In addition, a vacant position was eliminated, and another full-time post was reduced to part time.

LCMS World Mission currently is putting together a strategic plan to guide future work, so Roegner had expected to reorganize the department over the next year or so anyway.

“Because of the financial challenges, we had to act sooner — and go farther — than we had imagined,” he said.

### Kieschnick urges Synod to stay ‘forward looking’

Controversy “must never stop us from being a forward-looking and forward-moving church,” Synod President Gerald Kieschnick told the 2002 LCEF Fall Leadership Conference.

The annual Lutheran Church Extension Fund conference, held Nov. 22–24 at Irvine, Calif., drew nearly 700 Synod and LCEF leaders. In comments to the conference Nov. 23, Kieschnick reflected on challenges facing the church and offered a vision in a phrase: “One Mission, one message, one people.”

He acknowledged the previous year as one of “introspection and soul searching in our Synod,” citing the post-Sept 11,

2001, “A Prayer for America” at New York’s Yankee Stadium as a “flash point.”

Despite any differences, the president said, our calling is to be “a Synod with one mission. That mission is to win the world for Jesus Christ.”

Even with the challenges, “there’s lots of good news [about] the health and vitality” of the Synod, Kieschnick said.

In his address, LCEF President Merle Freitag said that LCEF’s assets have grown from \$78 million to almost \$1.3 billion since it was incorporated 25 years ago.

LCEF, which provides loans for church-related construction, has approved loans averaging \$225 million for each of the past two years, Freitag reported.

### Board monitoring for responsibility

The income shortfall facing the Synod did not lead to any specific budget action when the Synod’s Board of Directors met Nov. 20–22. But, says Chief Administrative Officer Brad Hewitt, the Board is “actively monitoring to be sure the Synod stays financially responsible.”

The LCMS budget saw a shortfall in designated gifts and grants that totaled some \$3.1 million during the first three months of this fiscal year, which began July 1. Congregational giving continues to meet budget expectations, however.

Hewitt said that the units most affected—the Board for Mission Services and Board for

Human Care Ministries—are dealing with the problem.

The mission board has eliminated 17 full- and part-time staff positions in St. Louis and will close some overseas mission fields earlier than planned (see story above). And, Human Care Ministries will cut the number of grants that it funds for the rest of the fiscal year, Hewitt told the Board.

### For more news...

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

## COP adopts five objectives to address controversy

The LCMS Council of Presidents (COP) Nov. 22 adopted five objectives meant to address the current controversy in the Missouri Synod.

Making up the COP are the 35 LCMS district presidents, the Synod president and its five vice presidents.

COP Chairman Arleigh Lutz referred to the objectives as “a plan for addressing the sad divisions and unbecoming conduct on the part of certain members of the Synod.”

The outline says, “Because Jesus Christ is our peace and has made us one, the Council of Presidents renews its commitment to lead the Synod in addressing:

“1. the need to work toward agreement in doctrine and practice.

“2. the need to provide safe places for responsible theological and doctrinal discussion on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

“3. the need to avoid party spirit, rancor and name calling and to treat one another in Christian love.

“4. the need throughout the Synod for God’s people to seek that humility which leads to genuine repentance and forgiveness.

“5. the need to support the president and all other elected officers of the Synod in every effort to focus our church on

the Great Commission and to work for harmony within the Synod.”

COP members agreed to devote time at the next COP meeting, April 4–9, to develop the outline.

Much of the controversy in the Synod centers on participation in 2001 by Atlantic District President David Benke in a post-Sept. 11 event in New York’s Yankee Stadium.

## Leaders call for renewing talks

Renewed theological talks and more frequent meetings of top leadership are in the offing between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Members of the Committee on Lutheran Cooperation (CLC) agreed Nov. 12 at their meeting in St. Louis that they would pursue discussions of issues that divide the two church bodies. The CLC

has six members from each of the two church bodies, including ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson and LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick.

They also agreed once again to meet twice a year. In recent years, the CLC reduced its original semi-annual meeting schedule to one meeting a year.

The next CLC meeting is set for April 3 in Chicago.

## LCMS family in Ohio escapes tornado that killed four

Mark and Cynthia Klinger, members of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Van Wert, Ohio, lost almost everything in the Nov. 10–11 storms that spawned more than 70 tornadoes and left a path of destruction from Louisiana to Pennsylvania, killing 36 people in five states. Four people were killed in Van Wert and the surrounding area.

The Klingers, who hid in the “crawlspace” under their home’s floor with their 4-year-old daughter, say it’s a miracle they weren’t seriously injured when the winds tore their house off its cement-

block foundation.

LCMS churches were spared, but several members lost their homes and

about two dozen others reported property damage.

Rev. Gilbert Furst, director of Lutheran

Disaster Response (LDR), a cooperative ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, reports that local LDR coordinators are assessing damages and responding to needs in Alabama, Ohio, Tennessee and Mississippi.

Gifts to provide assistance to storm victims — earmarked “Southeast Tornadoes” — may be sent to LCMS World Relief/Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-9810. Or, call the credit-card gift line at (888) 930-4438.



Cynthia Klinger surveys tornado damage on the lot where her house once stood. Klinger, her husband, Mark, and 4-year-old daughter, Mikenna, are members of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Van Wert, Ohio.

## SCRIPTURAL TRUTHS ABOUT DEATH

by David E. Wiesner

**M**any people are uncomfortable when the subject of death comes up in conversation. They change the subject as quickly as possible. Few know what to say to the bereaved at a funeral. When called upon to care for a dying loved one, many avoid discussing death with the person in their care.

The Lord wants us to reach out in love to others when they are in need. But this is not easy to do when we are filled with our own anxiety. Let's turn to Scripture for the truth that will equip us.

**Truth #1** – Death is inevitable.

When young, we think we will live forever. As we grow older, we do everything we can to hold on to our youth—hoping we can live longer. But no matter how much time, energy and money we pour into exercise, diets and vitamins, all of us will die.

What insights does God offer regarding death in the following scriptures?

Ps. 90:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 139:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 6:27 \_\_\_\_\_

Eccl. 3:1–2 and 8:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 5:12 \_\_\_\_\_

**Truth #2** – Death is not God's creation.

Many people get angry with God when a loved one dies. But God created Adam and Eve in His own image, and He intended for them to live in perfect communion with Him forever.

What does Gen. 3:22–24 tell us

about God's plan for life and death?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

God instructed Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For if they did, God warned, "you will surely die" (Gen. 2:15–17).

Read Gen. 3:1–13. Who was responsible for death entering the world?

**Truth #3** – Death causes grief.

Christians sometimes feel guilty about grieving. They think it's a sign of weak faith and a lack of trust in God. But we should not feel guilty to grieve. Death is unnatural in God's creation. God gives us life; sin and death snatch it away. God gives us loving relationships; death robs us of them. God gives us feelings of joy and love; death replaces them with sorrow and anguish.

What kinds of grieving are mentioned in Gen. 23:1–2?

Deut. 34:5–8 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Sam. 18:32–19:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 19:41–44 \_\_\_\_\_

John 11:32–35 \_\_\_\_\_

John 20:10–12 \_\_\_\_\_

**Truth #4** – Jesus has overcome death.

While Christians mourn like everyone else, they need not despair. God has given us hope. He knew from the beginning that Adam and Eve would sin and bring death upon themselves and their

descendants. So before He created the heavens and the earth, God fashioned a plan to rescue them—and us—from death.

What is God's plan of salvation, and why should we derive comfort from it when we face death?

Read 1 Peter 1:18–20, Eph. 1:4, and 2 Tim. 1:8–9, then write out your answer.

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Jesus Christ, the Son of God, carried out God's plan of salvation to perfection. He kept the law perfectly on our behalf. He took the punishment that we deserved and suffered the anguish of hell on the cross in our place. He paid the price for our sins in full.

Read Rom. 4:25, and in your own words explain the phrase, "He was *delivered over* to death."

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How is this evidenced in Matt. 27:45–46?

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When all was finished, Jesus gave up His spirit in death. But, three days later, He rose in victory over sin and death. His victory is our victory. Read John 11:25 for His assurance of eternal life.

**Truth #5** – Death brings new life.

Death occurs when the soul leaves the body. The lifeless body is buried to await the resurrection of the dead on the Day of our Lord. But the soul lives on.

Read Luke 16:19–31. What happened to Lazarus' soul when he died?

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Read Luke 23:39–43. When was Jesus' promise to take place?

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Read Luke 23:44–46. What were

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Jesus' words at the moment of His own death?

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For believers in Christ, death is not the end of life; it is the beginning of life as God intended it to be. It is the moment at which He delivers us from the pain and sorrow of this life.

**Truth # 6** – We are not alone in death.

Death is often accompanied by fear of pain, suffering, separation

and the unknown. Many also fear being alone at death. There is One who stays with us—our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised, “I will be with you always” (Matt. 28:20).

What assurances are we given in the following passages that Jesus will keep this promise: Ps. 23:4, Rom. 8:38–39, Rom. 14:8, and 2 Tim. 4:18?

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Pray about these truths concern-

ing death, asking God's Holy Spirit to prepare you for dealing with the end of your life on this earth or for helping others deal with their death.



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*Rev. David E. Wiesner is visitation pastor, St. John Lutheran Church, Arnold, Mo.*

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# FROM MICHIGAN TO EAST AFRICA

*Scott Yakimow prepared for a career as an engineer. Miriam Sailer wanted to be a dance-therapist. God had other plans for them both.*

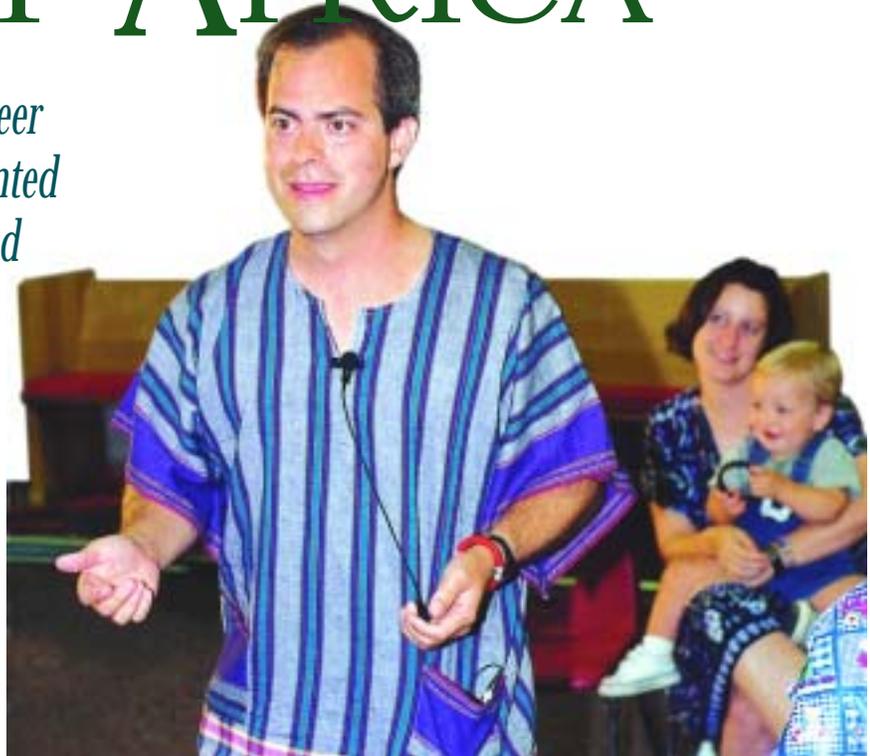
by Karen Eggemeyer

“This just seems what God wants me to do,” Scott Yakimow said. “So, I’m going to do it.”

Scott was born and raised in Marshall, Mich., a town of about 7,500, where he and his family were active members of Zion Lutheran Church. He attended Sunday school, midweek classes and joined the youth group in high school. He was involved quite heavily in Lutheran Youth Fellowship, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s organization for teens.

The Yakimow family traveled overseas a lot—exposing Scott and his sister to many different people and cultures. “I remember what interested me the most,” Scott said, “was the people. I complained to my parents that we were traveling too quickly. I wanted to stop and talk to everyone—to get to know them, to know how they lived.”

It was really no surprise that, as he began college at Valparaiso University in Indiana to become an engineer, he became more and more interested in foreign missions. In his junior year, in 1993, he questioned his career choice; he was not sure if engineering was right for him.



During a casual discussion, an old friend brought up Scott’s past interest in mission work. “That’s when it hit me,” Scott said. “I seriously began thinking of doing foreign mission work. Then, everything I did, everywhere I went, everything reinforced my interest in missions.”

After he graduated from Valparaiso with a degree in engineering, and before starting a job with a large engineering firm near Minneapolis, Scott took some time off to explore his dream.

## **A life-changing experience**

Through the World Mission Prayer League, Scott did volunteer work in Kenya, East Africa. The World Mission Prayer League places Lutheran laypeople in countries around the world to help with medical missions, light construction, teaching, leading Bible classes and wherever help is needed.



He spent about three months in Africa, much of the time in Nairobi, working with the “Rooms of Refuge” program. This program introduced Christ to young men who migrated to the city from the bush and provided spiritual and physical support to help them become accustomed to city life.

He also spent a few weeks with missionaries in northern Kenya, where he helped fix their homes and buildings to facilitate their medical work and their teaching about Jesus. He became fascinated by the people of Africa, their culture, their faith, their lives.

“I had some fantastic experiences,” he said reflectively. As he walked through the villages, the mothers smiled at him as he watched their children at play. He realized that he wanted to help these people—in the physical sense as well as spiritually.

### The road less traveled

Miriam Sailer, a pastor’s daughter, grew up in central Indiana. She too was heavily involved in the church, even playing the organ for church services as early as the seventh grade. Dancing was a large part of her life, and she used her gifts as a soloist dancer at the Synod’s 1989 National Youth Gathering in Denver. After high school, she attended Indiana University, majoring in dance therapy. Ultimately, because of an injury, she changed universities and majors—ending up at Valparaiso and majoring in psychology. That’s where she met Scott. They had just started dating when he left to go to Africa.

“I thought he was kind of crazy,” she said laughingly.



*Scott and Miriam Yakimow and their son, Jonathan, receive the blessings of the people whose donations made their mission possible at a commissioning service at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Omaha, last July.*

Photo courtesy of Gary Thies

## GOD WORKS THROUGH ‘EVERYDAY’ PEOPLE

Scott and Miriam Yakimow had been sent to be missionaries to Kenya, East Africa, on a delayed vicarage. Their 2-year-old son, Jonathan, was also going. Scott was prepared to assist in evangelistic outreach in an area that is the fastest growing area for Christianity in the world.

But, with the current budget restrictions for missionaries, who would God use to send this family?

About 35 people came to the tiny basement of a small rural church in the cornfields of Nebraska to hear my presentation about this opportunity to help. Afterward, when most had left, one farmer approached me saying, “Gary, I want you to know that I am the reason that you came here tonight. I have had trouble sleeping since my dad died. I was with him just before the Lord called him home ... and he said to me, ‘I could have done so much more for the Lord’s work, but I didn’t.’”

“I don’t want to say those words when God calls me home. I know God has called me to be the first to help the Yakimow family.”

That night, I called Scott and Miriam. They were amazed at what God had done. Scott said, “I have never been to Nebraska, and yet, God is calling people there to help.”

That was just the beginning. In a matter of weeks, more people from the area responded. Eventually, for the first time in the history of our Synod, 100 percent of the first-year funding for this missionary family was provided in advance of their leaving—by God’s people from Iowa, Nebraska and beyond.

On July 9, 2002, a commissioning service was held at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Omaha. One hundred and thirty people were there to lay their hands on them and send them off, just as in Acts 13:3.

Everyone wore his or her “everyday” clothes so that the Yakimow family could see the real people that God had called to be a part of this ministry. There were farmers, doctors, lawyers, construction workers, retired people, a state senator, a district president, students, teachers, cattle feeders, fertilizer-plant owners.

All were present—along with the Holy Spirit.

Reflect on the words of the apostle Paul, “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace ...” (Gal 1:15). The Lord is still calling people to be part of His work in all nations.

— Gary Thies  
*Mission Development Counselor  
LCMS World Mission*

# Making Mission Happen

January is “Mission Month” in the annual LCMS calendar of ministry emphases. More than any time in recent history, people in our church are asking, “How can I become personally involved in mission activity in an appropriate and meaningful way?”

There are many opportunities for involvement at the local, district, national and international levels.

The Christian’s response to the Great Commission exhibits itself in seven actions: *pray, go, send, learn, tell, give, celebrate*.

The *giving* and *sending* of Scott and Miriam Yakimow is just one example of living out these mission responses.

The Yakimows themselves responded to God’s call to serve as missionaries by *going*. In Kenya, they will

spend a good deal of time *telling* the Good News of Jesus.

You can *learn* more about the work God is doing through our mission activity together by visiting the LCMS World Mission Web site ([www.lcmsworldmission.org](http://www.lcmsworldmission.org)), with its hundreds of pages of information about mission activity at home and worldwide. Another type of learning happens when members are in Bible study and wherever God’s Word is taught.

Missionary Larry Steckling in Kazakhstan said, “When individuals and congregations told us how they were *praying* for us on a regular basis, the importance of prayer took on a new meaning. It was a significant encouragement to us to know

that we were being remembered in prayer.”

The question, “How can I become personally involved in mission activity in the church?” is answered in these seven mission responses. One can *learn, tell, pray, give, send, celebrate*—and, when God’s call to action comes, go.

The resources available during Mission Month provide ways for each member of a congregation to put an individual Christian mark on every aspect of daily life through the mission responses. Use the calendar on the next page for activity suggestions for each day in January based on the mission responses. There are also links to additional resources on the calendar.

— *Rev. Ronald E. Nelson*  
*Director, World Mission Support*  
*The LCMS Foundation*



*In a recent newsletter, Scott Yakimow (center, standing) wrote of his visit to Korokow, a Kenyan village at the top of a mountain, literally at the end of the road. The villagers built the road a few years ago specifically so the Lutheran missionaries could come up to their village and preach the Gospel. Today there’s a mission training center on the mountain, and 10 churches have been started from this center.*

“I had never considered mission work at all.”

Miriam attended Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., to get a master’s degree in youth and family ministry, which she used for eight years as director of youth ministries at various churches. While at Luther, she discovered the seminary had a master’s program in Islamic studies, which she knew would interest Scott because of his experiences in Kenya.

## Years of study

“I worked as an engineer for five years,” Scott said, “and I have to say, it was an exciting experience for me.”

But, all during his engineering career, he was work-

ing toward his master’s degree in Islamic studies at Luther Seminary. Miriam, at the urging of Dr. Roland Miller, who was head of the Islamic Studies program, also took courses in Islam. He urged them both to explore mission work. So in 1996, Miriam went to study in India for 14 weeks; at the same time Scott worked on his masters thesis in Pakistan.

Scott proposed to Miriam in India and they were married in 1997. They both knew they were headed for mission work as laypeople—but they didn’t know where.

## A new career

Scott was frustrated. He knew that he wanted to do mission work, but, as a layperson, he knew he would have to spend time in a foreign county working primarily as an engineer.

*(Continued on Page 22)*



While in Kenya, Scott and Miriam Yakimow will work with LCMS missionaries John and Kathy Duitsman. John (above, left), the area director for East Africa, discusses plans for a school with a local Masai leader. Kathy (below) uses a digital camera to make friends with students at a Masai village in Kenya.

(Continued from Page 20)

But that wasn't enough. "I wanted to be more involved in ministry," he said. "It took me by surprise when Miriam said to me, 'Why don't you just become a pastor then?' I knew she was right."

Scott began classes at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in fall 1999. "If God wants me to be a missionary," Scott prayed, "it will happen." And it did. LCMS Director of Missionary Services John Mueller visited with the Yakimows one evening and suggested that they consider missionary work—in Kenya, of all places!

## Doubts and faith

Did Scott and Miriam ever have doubts about entering missionary work? "Of course," Scott said, "especially after our son was born. But, no matter where you are, you have to trust God to take care of your kids."

That's an issue that doesn't bother Miriam either. "We'll be living in a large city, and I know there's good pediatric care there," she said. "I'll be able to concen-

trate on raising Jonathan and supporting Scott's work."

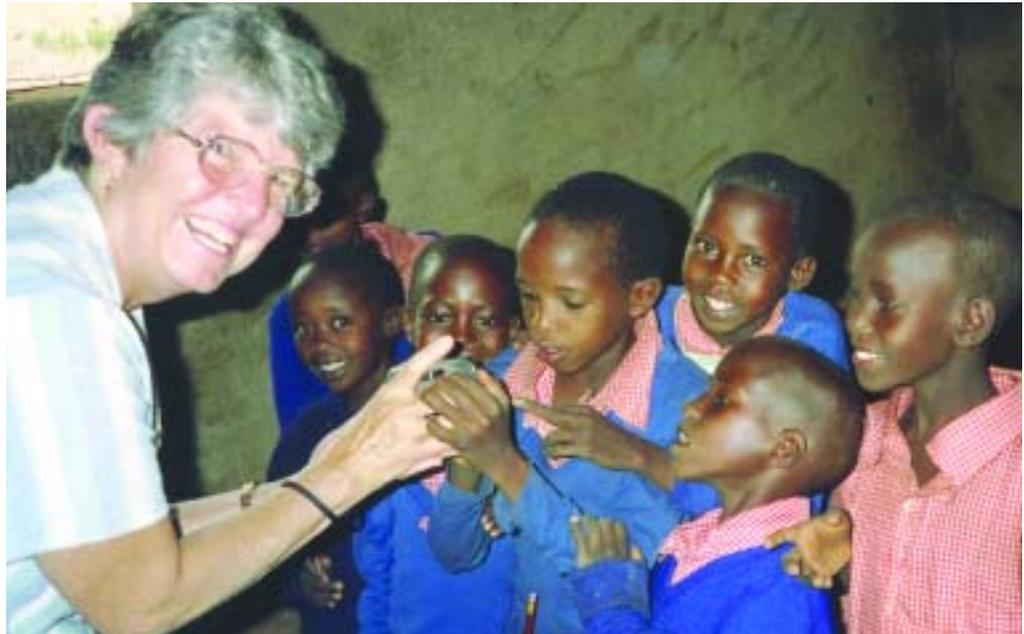
"It just seems to me that God wants people in certain places," Scott said, "and He's going to provide them with the gifts and the abilities and the support to do it."

"I've always looked at it as this is just what God wants me to do. So I'm doing it," he said enthusiastically.

## Starting on a journey of faith

Scott, Miriam and Jonathan left for Kenya in August. For the first six months, they are attending language school south of Nairobi, learning Swahili. "God was preparing me for this for many years!" Scott said, referring to his earlier trip to Kenya. After an extended 21-month vicarage, they will return to the United States for his graduation and ordination.

"I can't wait to begin work," Scott said, "I've been heading in this direction since 1993!" Miriam echoed those words. "We want to start our life—and our life's work," she says.



Karen Eggemeyer is manager, editorial services, in the Synod's Information Services department.

## THE COURAGE OF CONVICTION

A book titled *In Search of a Home ... Nineteenth-Century Wendish Immigration* is of personal interest, since my paternal ancestors were Wends who left their homeland and came to America, seeking not only economic enhancement but also freedom from religious oppression.

The Wends—or Sorbs, as they are also called—resided in southeastern Germany, bordered on the east by what is now Poland, on the south by today's Czech Republic. Many of them left this land and migrated to Australia, North America and Africa. Wendish immigration often followed that of the Germans.

The earliest Wendish emigrants traveled to Australia. Although they tried to take along a Wendish-speaking pastor to provide unity, they were unsuccessful and no single, large Wendish settlement was formed.

The largest number migrated to Texas, where at Serbin, under the leadership of Pastor Jan Kilian, they formed a Wendish community, retaining their own language in church, school and home. Indeed, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Serbin will celebrate its 150th anniversary May 30, 2004.

The local agricultural conditions proved too poor to sustain many people, however, so the Wends of Texas also scattered to different parts of the state and eventually lost most of their ethnic distinctiveness. Significant ethnic pride, however, is very much alive, exemplified most vividly in my own mind by buttons and bumper stickers that say, "Kiss me. I'm Wendish!"

Smaller numbers of Wends migrated to Canada, Nebraska and

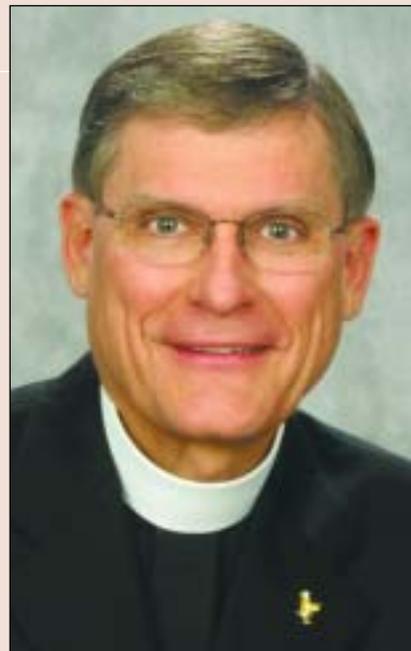
South Africa. These Wends generally settled among Germans and were absorbed by the local German communities.

Of particular interest to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is the religious freedom component of the Wendish and German migrations. Along with many German people, the Wends were deeply troubled by a decision made by the ruler of Prussia, Frederick William III, a Calvinist. He "initiated a program whereby both Protestant bodies, Lutheran and Calvinist, would be unified into a single state church. Many Sorbs (Wends), including the Lutheran clergyman Jan Kilian, eventually found this religious policy unacceptable and added this cause to the list of reasons for leaving their homeland," notes *In Search of a Home*.

Indeed, many ancestors of members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, both Germans and Wends, left Germany as a result of this attempt at enforced union between Lutherans and Calvinists, creating what has been and continues to be the aversion of our Synod to "unionism."

The context of the Prussian union provides greater understanding of the conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the LCMS, which include "*Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church and taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession*" (LCMS Constitution, Article VI).

How thankful we are that our



ancestors had the courage of conviction to leave behind everything they had known, to travel to an unknown and distant land and to establish for generations to come the foundations of our faith through that part of the Christian church that we know and love as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Our contribution to the heritage they began will influence and impact the generations that follow our own. It is my fervent prayer that we remain faithful to the faith of our forefathers and our foremothers, even as we boldly and courageously invest our lives, our talents and our treasures in the mission God has given us to accomplish—in the words of the LCMS Mission Statement, "*vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world.*"

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

### **Jerry Kieschnick**

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

John 3:16–17

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