

# The Lutheran WITNESS

MARCH 2002

VOL. 121 NO. 3



## God's Children At Ground Zero

Also: *'Be There'*

*'Happy Easter, Dad'*





Dear Dad,  
Remember me when you see  
this cross  
Love,  
CJ

# The Lutheran WITNESS

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

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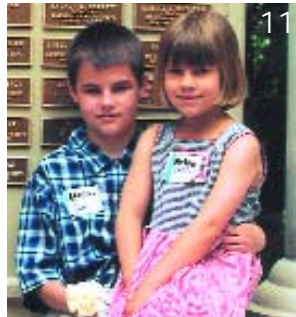
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# Letters

## Miracle babies



I prayed ... begged ... that the Lord would heal Krista and my unborn son that we could go home to a normal pregnancy and childbirth. He certainly answered my prayer ... but in His time.

Mark Platte  
Waverly, Iowa

THE ARTICLE BY LESLIE KRIETE ("I AM the Mother of a Miracle," Jan. '02) brought a flood of memories. My wife and I and our son, Nathan, endured virtually the same ordeal—toxemia, low birth weight and months in the hospital. I prayed ... begged ... that the Lord would heal Krista and my unborn son that we could go home to a normal pregnancy and childbirth. He certainly answered my prayer... but in His time. Nathan came home near his due date at just over four pounds and now is a free-spirited, inquisitive 5-year-old.

The importance of Baptism was made clear, too. We asked our pastor to baptize Nathan as soon as possible. I received comfort from knowing that Nathan was, with baptism, under greater protection and certainty than the medical staff or I could provide. I encourage all new parents to baptize their children as soon as possible and not delay in anticipation of a convenient time for family.

What an incredible responsibility to bring up these gifts we call children in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is certainly a treat to watch Nathan's faith grow. I continue to pray that our Lord will grant Nathan and his sister, Kelsey, continued blessings and the presence of His Holy Spirit that their faith would grow stronger each day.

Mark Platte  
Waverly, Iowa

I, TOO, AM THE MOTHER OF A MIRACLE baby. He was born April 27, 1970; weighed two pounds, two ounces; and was three months early. Michael was born in a Catholic hospital, so he was baptized in the delivery room. They couldn't believe the development of his lungs, but he had lots of dusky spells and stayed in the ICU for three months and another month and a half in the hospital. Now, he is 31 years old, was in the Army Airborne and is married. He is surely a miracle of God.

Diane Larson  
Cottage Grove, Minn.

### Law, or Gospel?

IT WAS DISCOURAGING FOR ME TO READ that "whether something is Law or Gospel can depend, in a sense, on the one who hears or reads it" ("Q&A," Jan. '02). Sure, when I read the Gospel, I might be reminded of the Law, but what I am reading is either Law or Gospel—not possibly one or the other depending upon how and who is reading it.

*The Lutheran Witness* for June 2000 reported that 54 percent of Lutherans believe that a good person can earn his way to heaven. If there is much more of the confusion reflected in the January "Q&A" over what constitutes the Gospel, I am sorrowfully beginning to understand such discouraging reports.

Rev. Eugene R. Paulus  
Redlands, Calif.

*The question was this: Is the Sermon on the Mount Law, or is it Gospel? Noting that "the answer is not as simple as it might seem," the response said it contains elements of both and gave examples of each. It appears the point could have been more clearly made, because "Q&A" did not mean to imply that the Gospel could be either good news or bad, depending on how one hears it.*

*At the same time, the response that people have to a given passage is not irrelevant. The apostle Paul notes that the same preaching of Christ crucified can be a "stumbling block," or it can be the saving "power of God" (1 Cor. 1:23-24).—Ed.*

### Confidential confession

WHEN I PRIVATELY CONFESS MY SINS to my pastor, I do so trusting that he takes to heart the answer to Question 267 in *Luther's Small Catechism*, that "the pastor is pledged not to tell anyone else of sins told him in private confession, for those sins have been removed." I therefore felt as though I were overhearing something I should not be hearing as I read dear Christof's thoughts confessed to Pastor Prange in "Missionary Journey" (Jan. '02). The pastor is not released of his pledge of confidentiality just because the confession happened to come from the lips of a stranger, on a ship, way over in Greece—or for any other reason!

Robin Muench  
Hermantown, Minn.

WHILE I ENJOYED PAUL PRANGE'S ARTICLE, I was surprised to read the details of Christof's confession, including the specific sins he confessed. Pastors at their ordination and at every subsequent installation promise "never to divulge the sins confessed."

Private confession and absolution is a gift and a joy, both to peo-

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ple struggling with sin and to the pastors who administer it in the stead of Christ. But how many people will be encouraged to receive that gift when they hear or read about the sins other people confessed? Will that not rather make them wonder if the sins they confess will be the next to be revealed?

*Rev. Robert Franck  
Duluth, Minn.*

*The Lutheran Church does indeed expect its pastors to maintain the seal of the confessional, that is, to keep a penitent's confession confidential. Lutheran pastors take this very seriously, and we and the author regret our lapse in this instance.—Ed.*

### ***It's what they do***

REV. KENT WARTICK ASKS "WHY DO NOT WE Lutherans get off our pews and start doing something positive? Why don't we write the books, broadcast on the radio, and publish in the press?" ("Letters," Dec. '01). This is exactly what the Lutheran Laymen's League has been doing with its Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM).

LHM publishes more than 60 booklets and puts them in racks, free for anyone who wishes them; broadcasts the "Lutheran Hour" and "Woman to Woman" every week on the radio; televises "On Main Street" with Dr. Dale Meyer every week; and produces and markets holiday television specials for Christmas and Easter. LHM also trains pastors and laypeople how to use the press in "Parish Media Workshops"; operates one of the finest Christian Internet Web sites of any church group; and operates 53 overseas workstations from which programs are produced that tell the story of Jesus.

All these are produced through the contributions of about 5 percent of LCMS communicant members. Think what could be done if 10 or 20 percent of LCMS members supported LHM.

*Paul W. Doenges  
Indiana District LLL  
Communications Officer  
Fort Wayne, Ind.*



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# GOD'S CHILDREN AT GROUND ZERO

*The stories of New York Lutherans touched by terror are stories of lives lived in the sure hope of Christ's Resurrection. Sept. 11 is no match for Easter.*

by David Benke

**W**e are all the custodians of a thousand thousand stories. As we hear them, we also feel them; at a certain point when the story is well told, when it touches us directly and personally, we begin to inhabit the bones of the storyteller. At some point, the story becomes part of us.

It is so most of all and to the ultimate degree with the Story called the Gospel. It is a life, and death and life Story. The life and death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah comes and fills us from the outside in, until, as Martin Luther said, "Christ is poured out in us." The Story of the Gospel is received in Holy Baptism, when we die and rise again in Christ to walk in newness of life. It is an endless, eternal walk, isn't it—through life and death again and into eternity?

We are all on a "first name" basis

with our God on that journey. He knows us as we are, and loves us all the same.

I am a baptized Christian named Dave. As a Missouri Synod district president and parish pastor I have been listening to the stories of God's faithful people in New York for the last six months on a first-name basis. I am going to share with you some of those stories from the lives of God's baptized children in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. These stories, these lives have purpose. They have meaning. For they are stories of lives with an eternal, hopeful destiny. They are our stories.

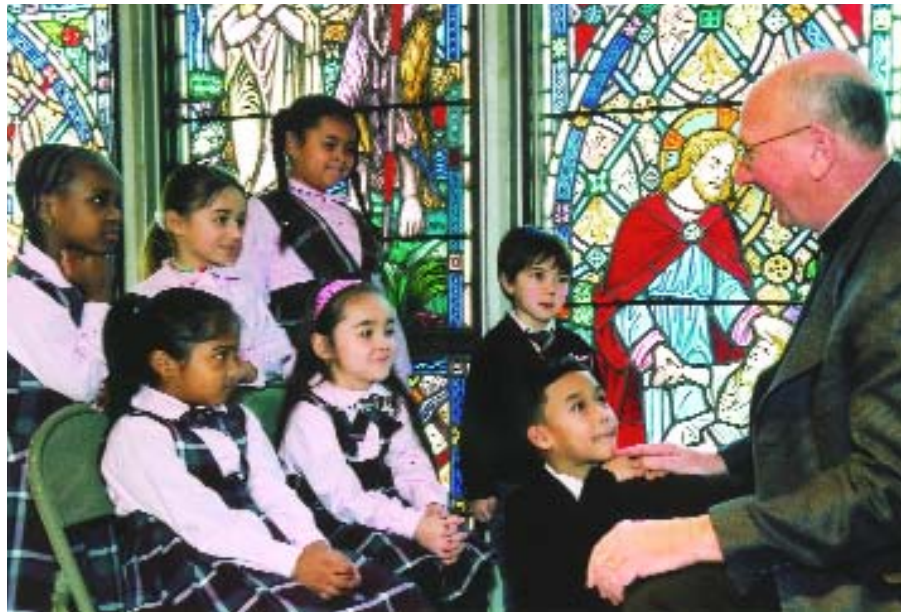
## Sept. 11, 2001

On Sept. 11, terror literally filled the air in New York City. Terror arrived on wings. Planes loaded

with jet fuel exploded against our Twin Towers. Crews, passengers and building inhabitants were incinerated. The buildings tumbled. Dust, smoke, air choking thick with the smell of death and destruction, covered the area immediately and for weeks thereafter.

Andrea pulled up to the corner of West and Chambers Streets, just a few blocks north of the World Trade Center, on Tuesday morning, Sept. 11. The traffic cop halted her at the intersection at 8:42. She was running late. She looked up. She saw, she heard, she felt the incredible crash of a plane hitting Tower One.

The traffic officer was knocked right off his feet. He immediately ran up to Andrea and shouted, "Pull over! You're a witness. I'm going to get an FBI official." While waiting,



*Pastor David Benke, president of the Atlantic District of the LCMS, meets with some of the children who attend St. Peter's Lutheran School, Brooklyn, N.Y.*

she became a witness the second time as she saw and heard and felt the second plane “diving into the other tower.” Cell-poning furiously, she exhorted her coworkers to leave their building nearby, helping to save their lives, promising to drive and meet those headed in a certain direction.

Eventually she did motor across Manhattan to the East Side, near the South Street Seaport. But by the time she got there the towers had begun to fall.

“They came toward me covered in dust and ashes, powdered gray,” Andrea remembers. “I couldn’t tell my people from anyone else. They all looked the same. So I made my way north out of town.” All of her coworkers made it out. She drove to a place where she could pray with friends, the life of Christ in them their strength and their hope.

Loretta may have walked right past Andrea’s car on the way uptown. “We all looked like snowmen,” she said. She fled silently with the others to the north; upon her arrival at Grand Central Station, she remembers the jaws of commuters who had just arrived hanging open, looking at her all covered in gray chalky dust—one of the “snowmen.” Loretta eventually arrived home on Sept. 11, changed forever by what she had seen, heard, felt. The robes of righteous-

ness in Christ kept her clean way down deep on the inside, at the level of her soul.

Providencia left her post as a social worker in lower Manhattan. “We were just told to get off the island any way we could,” she recalls. She trekked across the pedestrian lane of the Brooklyn Bridge, praying with every step, walking and running silently alongside thousands. Halfway over the bridge, Tower Two collapsed, and the cloud of darkness rolled toward them on the bridge.

Horrified, people ran for their lives across the span to Brooklyn. She says, “I will never forget the sight and the sound of the dust and smoke coming at us; it looked like the world was going to end.”

Darkness, thick darkness covered the earth. Yet Christ was still the Light on that bridge.

An hour after Andrea pulled away from the corner of West and Chambers Street, Bill was deposited there. LCMS Missionary to the Deaf in New York, Bill



*Frank Ciampa, pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, is one of many LCMS pastors who served—and are still serving—as chaplains, bringing the only hope humans really have, the love of Jesus.*

*The photo below was taken from the roof of Martin Luther High School, Maspeth, N.Y., just after the first tower collapsed.*





had made his way to the place God called him. He stood with other Christian chaplains and began to pray with firefighters. As they prepared to enter the burning cauldron that was the Trade Center Plaza, Bill recounts, “We made the sign of the cross as we anointed them with oil. We wanted them to remember their baptism. That’s the only promise they could know for sure at that moment—their baptismal promise.”

Many never came back. Marked with the cross, they were reminded of God’s sure promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

In Tower One, Richard had heard and smelled something from the floors above him. He determined it was time to leave. Mustering 200 fellow employees, he led them down 21 flights to the ground. Debris, falling objects, and falling people awaited them there. He remembers it clearly. “As we walked down, the firefighters were walking past us going up the stairs. Their foreheads were gleaming as they hustled by. We never saw them again.”

John, Matthew and Ron were New York City Firefighters. Lutheran firefighters. They gave their lives on Sept. 11 along with 363 of their firefighting, police and rescue-worker compatriots, running up the stairs others were running down.

Ron was the first fire marshal in the history of New York City to be killed in the line of active duty. He knew every inch of the Twin Towers. He was a decorated soldier who was part of the anti-terror force in New York City. He went back into Tower One when everyone was leaving, to help someone, to make a difference.

Matthew had received the Fire Department of New York Medal of Honor in 2000 for saving lives. John was a member of Rescue Company One. These rescuers, these savers of lives, gave theirs up. “Greater love has no man than this,” said Jesus, “than a man lay down his life for his friend.”

Steve is an FBI Chaplain and pastor. His good friend was fire department Chaplain Michael Judge, first person to die on Sept. 11 while responding to the terror at ground zero. Steve stayed on site for 15 straight days, bringing hope in the incarnate Word hour by hour to people who were numb from grief and the grueling constant task of rescue against the odds.

Ken and Mario are pastors who are volunteer firefighter chaplains. They were there in the smoke and the flames on Sept. 11 and in the next week, side by side with their compatriots, witnessing the life of Christ in a deadly time. Ken dug for life on “The Pile” from the very beginning of that rescue activity. He dug against time, against logic, against the burning from beneath. Mario went in with his Long Island crew the first evening to look for a compatriot

who was not to be found.

John and Frank are double-duty pastors as well. John has a parish and he serves as a Port Authority chaplain. The Port Authority of New York controls the airports, tunnels and bridges around New York City. It used to own the World Trade Center complex. John’s job was to be with people who had lost peace officers, corporate officers and workers—74 in number. John had been the lead chaplain on site after the crash of TWA Flight 800 in July 1996. He had seen destruction, and still was unprepared for the level of devastation at ground zero.

Frank doubled as a National Guard chaplain and pastor. His battalion was activated on Sept. 11, and he spent the next 10 days at ground zero.

He remembers, “The Guardsmen battled emotions of disbelief, depression, shock and anger. Morale soared when a few live victims were found, and sank almost as quickly as body parts of the dead were found. It was a roller-coaster ride. There were lights in the darkness—as I stared at the death and destruction, I saw good people fighting back with determination.”

Frank stood by this first-name baptismal hope, revealed in Rev. 21:7, “He that overcomes shall inherit all things. I will be his God and he shall be my son.”

Harry was in Tower Two, halfway up. “My office faces the water. I looked out and saw paper streaming past the window, like confetti, from the first Tower. I didn’t know exactly what had happened, but I decided to leave.” He walked down more than 50 flights, then ducked the objects falling from the sky in the plaza.

When he got to a safe place, he called a friend, up further in the second tower. “While I was on the phone

*Three LCMS firefighters were among those who gave their lives on the day of the attacks, charging back into the ground-zero inferno to help thousands of people escape.*



with him, telling him he'd be OK, the phone went dead. The tower collapsed."

Brian, an LCMS baptized Christian, stayed at his desk about 30 floors above Harry. The Tower collapsed on him. The force of death and evil can be overwhelming. Only God gives strength to go on.

Sherry was five months pregnant with twins, up in Tower Two. She was told to stay where she was after the initial crash, but she decided to leave. She walked down more than 50 flights of stairs and out and up through Manhattan. Her mother, Jasmine, also in lower Manhattan, knowing Sherry was in Tower Two, tried to break through the police barricade to find her daughter but was turned back. She wondered all day whether Sherry, and the babies within her, had made it out. They survived on the power of hope—hope in Christ, and their hope did not fail them!

On Sept. 11, I made my way to my parish and school in Brooklyn, St. Peter's. When the children saw their parents arrive to pick them up at odd hours, many covered with ashes and soot, they were frightened. We had prayed with them, for them, among them through the day. But they were afraid, and so were their dads and moms. So was I. So were we all.

During the next week, the children began to complain of nightmares. Their dreams took on the shape of the reality at ground zero. The children of God understood in ways they never wanted to discover the reality of death and destruction. Could they find strength to move on? Can they?

## Today

What has happened since Sept. 11? To some degree the dust has

settled at ground zero. With all the increased security measures and the sense that we are still the prime target for terror, we New Yorkers hurry on. The digging continues there on site; a million tons of rubble has been trucked away. There is a new mayor in New York City.

But ground zero for me, for us, has become all the places in metro-



*Lutheran church members unload food in the Bronx on Jan. 28, 2002. The food came from Nebraska, delivered through the Orphan Grain Train, a Lutheran relief effort. Lutheran Disaster Response of New York (LDRNY) along with Lutheran Social Services helps restock food pantries for those affected by the attacks.*

politan New York where all the healing power of God in Christ is made available. It has become a hundred LCMS churches and schools, hospitals and homes, counseling centers and nursing homes. Ground zero is where God's baptized children are.

Lutheran Disaster Response of New York (LDRNY) was formed

within a week of Sept. 11. It has become a vessel of hope for thousands, offering the consolation and refreshment of the Spirit through Lutheran hands. LDRNY is an organization dedicated to bringing love on a first-name basis, because it is a ministry of God's baptized children.

But what about the God's children, those baptized into Christ Jesus in the LCMS? What has happened to them?

For one, we have buried our dead. Pastors Vern, Dwayne, Harry, Charles and others have told the Story in settings jammed with mourners from every possible background. Vern, preaching at Concordia College, location of Ron's funeral, proclaimed, "Ron was a hero in every possible way—to his country, his city, his fellow firefighters and his family. But what matters to him now is that he was baptized. He is a child of God with Christ forever."

Andrea celebrated New Year's Eve at her church in Harlem. It was the first such New Year's Eve party. "And we needed it!" she exclaimed. "We needed to be together, to know that God's hand was upon us and we could face the New Year together." A child of God surrounded by the Body of Christ, she and her family face the future.

Loretta and Providencia, who fled uptown and to Brooklyn, found great hope and healing in their congregations as well. "Here I can share my

life, sing my songs, pray my prayers and study God's Word," Provi states. She and her husband have planned a 25th wedding-anniversary vow renewal in church on a Sunday morning right after Easter.

Loretta says, "I have the greatest friends in the world at my church. Even through personal health problems and Sept. 11, I have been lifted



up by my friends at Trinity.”

Richard and Harry have stayed with their jobs, but it hasn't been easy. Richard's work locale has changed from lower Manhattan to Long Island.

## *Christ is alive*

Harry has had to work through the memory of that final phone call with his friend. Both men have needed God's healing power to reduce the forceful effect of the sights and sounds of Sept. 11 on their spirits.

On Jan. 21, 2002, at 11:18 AM Sherry and Nick became the proud parents of Samuel Deo; at 11:20 they became the proud parents of Joshua Anil. Their twins are now baptized children of God, visible signs of life and hope from ground zero.

Bill has been able to speak the life-giving energy of baptismal grace to the deaf community in an "anointed" context; he is busy establishing new preaching stations in metropolitan New York.

Frank has answered the Divine Call into active-duty Army chaplaincy. John and Ken and Mario and Steve have found that both parish-pastor and community "hats" have given them incredible opportunities to speak the love of Jesus in these months.

All six pastors, and many more church workers, have taken some time away since Sept. 11. Encouraged to do so by grants from Lutheran Disaster Response of New York, the men needed refreshment and renewal at all parts of their being. Most of them did not and could not leave until after Christmas. But they needed to get away. They needed it for themselves, for their families, for their vocation. These get-aways are called "Respite Care." They are not an option. They are a necessity.

In those parishes and ministries, when pastors have gone away, others have come to help. From Florida and Nebraska, Minnesota and California they have arrived to listen, to learn, to bring comfort, to bring Jesus—Dan and Bob, Steve and Lee, Jack and Donald, Layton and Roger, Todd and Roger, Tom and Rick. And many more are still on the way. Partnership in the Gospel is a form of mutual encouragement. All of these men are now honorary New Yorkers for life—and that's no small accomplishment.

But what about the children? What about their moms and dads? Marlene, who heads the Lutheran Schools Association, has been bringing counseling and financial assistance to families in Lutheran schools through LDRNY for five months. She has also been sending literally thousands of toys, cards and letters to Lutheran schools from her office/warehouse. The response from around the country from Lutherans for Lutheran children has been incredible.

"I am always touched when I see the look in the eyes of our children as they read the cards of love and support from some school far away—they need to know they're loved and special right now," Marlene recounts. "But at the same time, I am receiving the stories of layoffs and unemployment, of families in crisis. When we can help, and help quickly, we are called 'blessed' because we can bring blessing."

## *in New York City!*

Victoria, a first grader at an LCMS school, lost her mother on Sept. 11. She has received a full tuition scholarship from LDRNY funds so that she can continue her life in a stable and Christian school environment. Thousands of "honorary New Yorkers" have brought blessings to the children and their families through LDRNY.

### **Tomorrow**

Do you sense what's happening in New York? The dust is settling. The nightmares are receding. But the stories continue to get told and lived and seen and heard and felt every day. It is the same strong Story that weaves its way through each individual story. The cross of Christ is our glory. The resurrection of Christ is our hope. The life of Christ is our life.

What's left to be told we do not know. What we do know is that powerful partnerships among God's baptized children produce blessings and healing, enduring love and endless opportunity.

Christ is alive in New York City!

He is risen! He is risen indeed.



*Dr. David Benke is president of the Atlantic District and pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Brooklyn, N.Y.*

## HE SUFFERED FOR OUR SALVATION

by Andrew Simcak Jr.

**W**hat thoughts go through your mind, especially during Lent and Holy Week, when you think of the suffering of Jesus? Perhaps, you think of what the Apostles' Creed confesses: "He suffered under Pontius Pilate." That definitely recalls for us the many physical sufferings Jesus endured after His betrayal and arrest.

However, there is much to the story more than the bodily sufferings ordered by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea.

The Athanasian Creed opens up the full meaning of our Savior's suffering by stating: "He suffered for our salvation." His suffering was not only physical in nature. Let us consider the how, the why and the meaning of His suffering for our salvation.

### Life of suffering

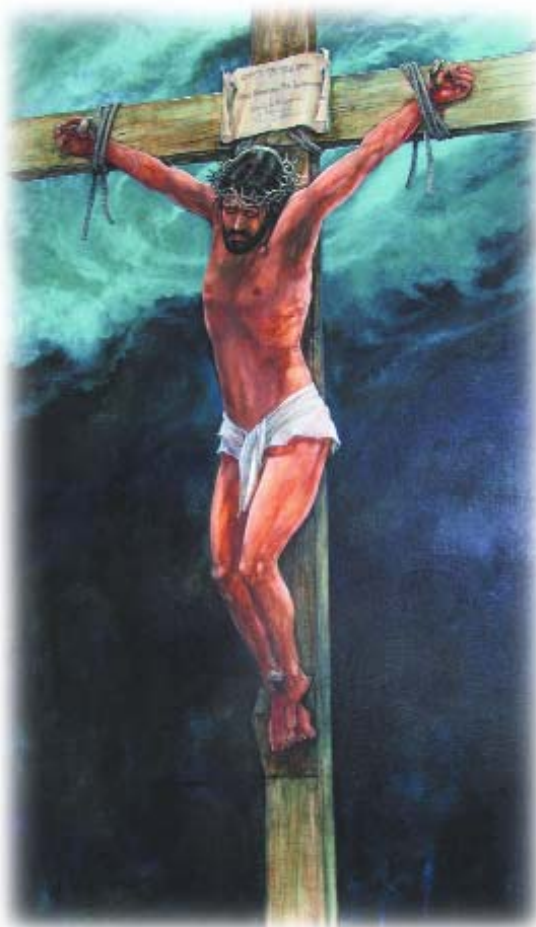
Jesus' entire life on earth was a life of suffering; it was in reality a passion story.

How do the following passages tell you about some of the humiliation and suffering Jesus endured prior to Holy Week? Let's begin with His birth in told in Luke 2:7. Imagine the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords born in a manger—a feeding trough for animals.

Luke 4:16–30 tells us that Jesus' own people rejected Him. What do you understand to be the reason they "drove Him out of town"?

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### Under Pilate

Look at the following passages and write a statement in your own words that helps you understand the intensity and the brutality of the bodily punishment Jesus suffered during Holy Week.

Luke 22:44 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is. 50:6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 26:67 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 27:26–31 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 23:33 and John 19:17–18 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Calvary's Cross

Jesus' greatest suffering for us was endured on Calvary's cross. Read Isaiah 53:5.

Our sins and the sins of every human—past, present and future—were transferred to Jesus on the cross. Read Matt. 27:46 to hear Jesus' cry in response to the transfer of our sins.

Why was Jesus forsaken by his Father? Read 2 Cor. 5:18–21. \_\_\_\_\_

According to 1 Peter 3:18, what is the reason Christ endured such complete suffering?  
\_\_\_\_\_

How grateful we are that Jesus the Christ suffered for our sins as our Substitute. With the Athanasian Creed we humbly affirm and assure ourselves that "He suffered for our salvation!"



Rev. Andrew Simcak Jr. is vacancy pastor at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas.



## Board orders halt to information about charges

The Missouri Synod's Board of Directors Feb. 1 ordered an immediate halt to distribution of any information concerning charges brought against Atlantic District President David Benke.

The charges, brought by a number of pastors and a congregation, relate to Benke's participation in "A Prayer for America" Sept. 23 at Yankee Stadium.

The Board indicated that it was taking its action because Bylaw 8.21e "clearly and specifi-

cally prohibits publicity from being given to a dispute by any party involved while a decision in the matter is pending or while an appeal is contemplated. The Commission on Constitutional Matters has recently explained that this bylaw applies to all parties to the dispute."

As authority for its order, the Board cited Bylaw 3.183d, which it said gives it "the duty to allocate available funds to the program boards of Synod, and the right to

call up for review, criticism, modification, or revocation any action or policy of a program board."

Dr. Martin Schramm, chairman of the Board for Communication Services (BCS), said that he fears the Board of Directors action halting all information through official channels will contribute to misinformation and rumor.

The BCS is responsible for the Synod's two official periodicals, *Reporter* and *The Lutheran*

*Witness*.

Schramm said the BCS may consider an official response to the Board of Directors resolution.

### Lutherans join Jan. 22 march

Lutherans were among thousands of abortion foes who gathered in Washington Jan. 22 to mark the 29th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion.

Representing Lutherans For Life (LFL) at this year's March for Life were more than 60 people, including LFL's executive director, Dr. James I. Lamb, and its board of directors. LFL is the pan-Lutheran pro-life group.

Although Lamb says he knows that the annual march is important, "our focus is to change hearts, not laws. We want abortion to be illegal. But our focus is to make it unthinkable," Lamb said.

### LHM launches Web site on Muslims

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM), St. Louis, has started a Web site to help Christians understand Islam and reach out to Muslims with the Gospel.

The site is named "Who Will Teach?" and is located at [www.whowillteach.com](http://www.whowillteach.com).

## CHI opens activity center for children

Concordia Historical Institute (CHI) dedicated its new Lutheran Children's Activity Center in January.

CHI—the Synod's Department of Archives and History—describes

the addition as "the ultimate Sunday-school room, [providing] children with a multi-media environment where church and Lutheran history come to life."

The activity center has

three areas—for missions, frontier and the Reformation—with "hands-on learning activities intended to be fun and educational," a CHI news release says.

"Though carefully designed to appeal to children 6 to 12 years in age, this activity center offers a tangible learning environment for children of all ages," says the release.

The center was made possible by grants from Lutheran Brotherhood and an anonymous donor.

For more information or for group appointments, contact CHI at 801 DeMun Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105; (314) 505-7900. The institute is located on the campus of Concordia Seminary in Clayton, Mo.



Sixth graders from St. Paul's Lutheran School, Des Peres, Mo., inspect a model of a boat like those that brought Saxon immigrants up the Mississippi River—one of the exhibits in CHI's new Children's Activity Center.

## Kieschnick meets with church partners

Missouri Synod President Gerald Kieschnick says that meetings in January with leaders of the Synod's eight partner churches in Europe have given him a new appreciation for the complexities of church relations and a greater understanding of the challenges those churches face.

"This was a great opportunity to meet these leaders on their turf, which gave me a greater understanding of life in their churches and countries," Kieschnick said after his return to the United States.

Kieschnick and Dr. Samuel H. Nafzger, executive director of the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, spent 17 days on the relationship-building trip last month. A meeting in Germany of the International

Lutheran Council (ILC) executive committee that the two attended provided them the opportunity to take additional time in Europe to visit the partner-church leaders.

## Lutherans help volcano victims

U.S. Lutherans have committed \$25,000 for relief work in Congo and Rwanda through Lutheran World Relief, Baltimore.

The aid comes after the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Jan. 17. It destroyed almost half of the nearby city of Goma, sending many thousands of people across the border into Rwanda.

LCMS World Relief provided an initial grant of \$10,000 to LWR, which works on behalf of the Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran

Kieschnick said that the visits "impressed upon me once again how important it is to keep lines of communication open." He said he supports more regularized ways of keeping in touch.

Church in America.

LWR is providing aid through Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, an inter-church emergency alliance.

Through ACT, Lutherans are providing food, water, bedding and other necessities to people affected by the eruption.

Contributions to assist refugees in the Congo and Rwanda—earmarked "Congo Volcano"—may be sent to LCMS World Relief, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-9810. Or, call the credit-card gift line at (888) 930-4438.

## Cochran to lead school ministry

William D. Cochran of St. Louis was installed last month as director of school ministry for the LCMS Board for District and Congregational Services.

He succeeds Dr. Carl Moser, who retired from the position in 2000.



Cochran

Cochran, 56, had been principal of Christ Community Lutheran School, St. Louis, since 1998. Previously, he was superintendent of Lutheran schools in the Eastern District and served Lutheran schools in Illinois and Michigan.

A 1968 graduate of Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Neb., Cochran has a master's degree from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

## LCMS mission goal: reach 100 million more people

The Synod's Board for Mission Services has gotten the go-ahead for a 15-year outreach initiative with the goal of bringing the Gospel to 100 million people who do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Approved by the Synod's Board of Directors at its Jan. 31-Feb. 3 meeting, the plan came about after two years of discussions

among Synod mission leaders. It is "unmatched" by any other Christian denomination, according to Rev. Robert Roegner, executive director of the Synod's mission board.

Preliminary plans indicate a need for about \$100 million for carrying out the initiative.

"I not only believe we can reach the goal, I believe that, by God's power, we can exceed it,"

Roegner said.

Mission board Chairman Kermit "Butch" Almstedt says that Synod mission leaders want to take a "quantum leap" by doubling or tripling the scope of LCMS mission work.

"We need to challenge the church at large for mission," Almstedt says, adding that he expects lay people to take the lead. "It's the laity [who are]

going to drive" the plan, he said, by "taking a personal interest in mission."

Dr. Robert Kuhn, chairman of the Synod Board of Directors, said the mission emphasis would "give our church focus and something for all of us to rally around."

The funding effort will be above and beyond LCMS World Mission's current \$28 million budget.



## DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

***It appears that district presidents in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have a great deal of power, much like a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church. Is this true, and do other denominations give so much power to men who are not currently serving a congregation as a pastor? C.R., Ohio***

District presidents do not hold or exercise as much power as might appear at first glance. In reality, the power within the Synod is primarily congregational, which immediately limits any “power” that the district president may have.

For example, a district president may not tell a congregation whom they must call as pastor or as another worker, as long as those workers are certified, that is, are in good standing on the roster of the Synod’s ordained or commissioned ministers. (The congregation is expected to consult with the district president about these matters, however.)

The district president also cannot tell the congregation what form of governance it must have. And while the district president has an

“oversight” role and responsibility, these are limited by the Synod’s Constitution and Bylaws to protect and respect the rights of the workers and congregations he serves.

Even the Synod president can only advise, admonish, reprove and, if he feels it necessary, report to the Synod. He has no power on his own to remove congregations or workers from the roster of the Synod.

What’s more, district presidents are not simply appointed by some person of higher authority but are elected by a pastor and lay representative from each congregation in the district. Furthermore, if they abuse their authority, they can be removed from office by the same procedure. Parenthetically, district presidents are concerned primarily

with service, seeking to determine how they can best assist congregations and church workers in carrying out their mission and ministry.

Many other denominations give their officers much more authority than is granted to LCMS district presidents. Some, for example, have bishops who may simply by fiat assign pastors to congregations and move them at specified intervals. Others are strictly congregational; they have little structure and allow congregations to do as they see fit, without respect to any other congregation in the fellowship. In contrast, the LCMS is neither strictly congregational nor hierarchical, but retains elements of both (with the hierarchical aspects relating primarily to its teachings).

**Send your questions to “Q&A,” c/o *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295. Please include your name and address. All questions will be considered, but none can be answered individually.**

## Shedding Some LIGHT

### Child’s play

The third-grade class had just finished the week’s Bible study on the Exodus and entry to Canaan. The teacher asked for students’ questions.

“Mr. Morkert,” Billy called to the teacher, “there is one thing I didn’t understand.”

“What’s that?” asked the teacher.

“Well, according to our Bible history book, the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, right?”

“Right,” Mr. Morkert confirmed.

“And the children of Israel fought and won the battle at Jericho, right?”

“That’s right.”

“And the Children of Israel built the temple, right?”

“That’s also correct,” agreed the

teacher. “So what’s your question, Billy?”

“What I’d like to know,” Billy continued, “is what were all the grown-ups doing?”

*Anonymous*

### Well, it coulda been ...

Michael Jordan, while playing basketball in high school against a Baptist school, banked a last-second acrobatic shot off the backboard and into the basket, winning the game for his team.

The headline the next day read: “On Jordan’s Bank, the Baptists Cry.”

*Joel P. Landskroener  
Seymour, Indiana*



## from the PRESIDENT

### LUTHERAN CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD

From Jan. 13 through Jan. 29, I visited the leaders of the Lutheran churches in Central and Eastern Europe with whom The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has established altar and pulpit fellowship. Accompanying me on the trip was Dr. Samuel Nafzger, executive director of our Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR).

During our 17 days in Europe, we visited the countries of Germany, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Finland, Denmark and England. Our meetings were held with the president, chairman, bishop or archbishop of each of the churches with whom our Synod has church-body fellowship. In most cases, we also met with other officers of our partner churches, including the board of

church body with whom such fellowship is being considered. Declarations of fellowship are determined only by the Synod in convention upon recommendation by the CTCR.

On a practical level, church-body fellowship means that members of our Synod may commune at the altars of our partner churches and *vice versa*. It also means that pastors of the LCMS may preach in the pulpits of our partner churches and *vice versa*, when invited by one another to do so.

The LCMS is currently in a relationship of altar and pulpit fellowship with Lutheran churches in these countries: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti and Hong Kong. Also India, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and the Philippines. Also Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Venezuela.

It is important to note that the declaration of church fellowship is part of the first objective of the Synod, as indicated in Article III of the Synod's Constitution: "The Synod, under Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions,

shall—

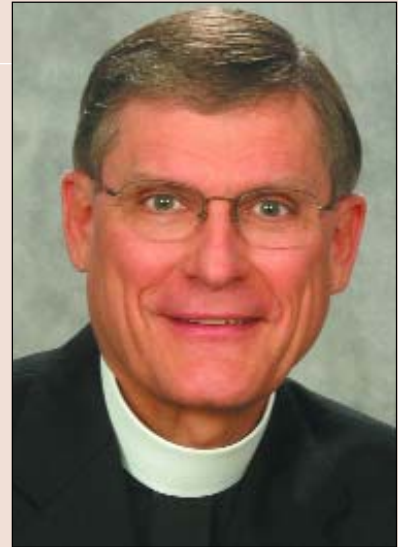
"1. Conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10, *work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies*, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy" (emphasis mine).

In the Gospel of John (17:1-3, 20-23), we receive a clear picture of the will of our Savior, as Jesus prayed:

*Jesus prayed: "... May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

directors, council, consistory and other national leaders. We also visited with the theological faculties of those churches that enjoy the blessing of institutions of theological education.

Altar and pulpit fellowship is established by our Synod only after extensive theological conversation determines that complete agreement in doctrine and practice exists between the LCMS and the



*Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ... My prayer is not for them [the disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

May God richly bless our Synod as we continue to endeavor to achieve the objective of recognizing and declaring God-given unity in doctrine and practice where such is present, by the grace of God and by the power of His Spirit.

**Jerry Kieschnick**

John 3:16-17

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Web page: [www.lcms.org/president](http://www.lcms.org/president)