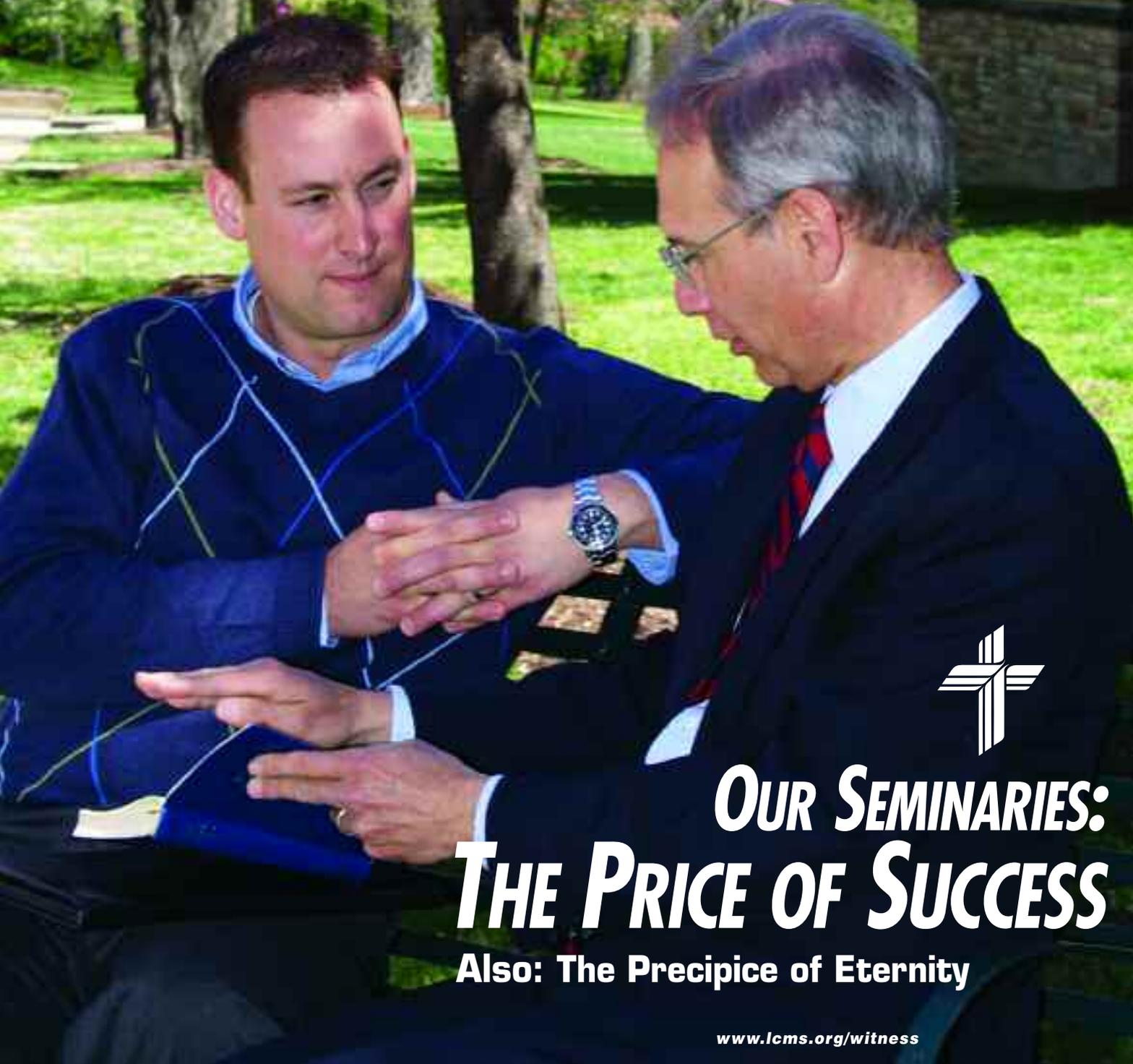


# The Lutheran WITNESS

MAY 2005

VOL. 124 NO. 5



## **OUR SEMINARIES: THE PRICE OF SUCCESS**

**Also: The Precipice of Eternity**

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St. Athanasius



# The Lutheran WITNESS

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

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## Internet dangers

...[C]ouples who say that soft porn is harmless are playing with fire and setting themselves up for a possible personal hell.

*Paul Koehler  
Omaha, Neb.*

I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION SOME ISSUES not raised in your important article (April '05) on the dangers of Internet pornography.

The fact that it's easier to prevent addiction to porn than to recover from it leads me to suggest that everyone consider Internet accountability software. This software monitors, but does not filter, the Web sites you visit and then sends a list of any questionable sites to your accountability partner(s). One such software program, "X3watch," is actually free. Raising this topic with a potential accountability partner also can open doors to a Christian witness.

Another problem is couples who allow so-called soft porn into their lives. Because pornography is progressive, it can get to a point where a man cannot have normal sexual relations with his wife without having to "recall" pornographic images. So, to couples who say it's harmless to view "soft" porn because it "turns them on" or is "good for both of them," you are playing with fire and setting yourselves up for a possible personal hell.

While intimacy is much more than sex, how sad that our culture is turning one of God's greatest gifts into a false promise. How sad that pornography, affairs, and all other things people chase to get some sort of extra pleasure ends up destroying the very pleasure being sought and takes away from the real deal: the basic, God-given gift of sex between loving spouses.

*Paul Koehler  
Omaha, Neb.*

ALTHOUGH I APPRECIATED THE TIMELY article on Internet dangers, I was disappointed that Pastor Sonnenberg focused only on cyber-sex.

Any overuse of the Internet (chat rooms, e-mail lists, surfing) can be harmful to marriages and families. I am currently struggling in my own marriage with a spouse who spends endless hours online. He participates in many discussion lists—not involving pornography but rather theology. In some ways pornography would be less troublesome to confront because it's so obviously a sin. It is easy for my spouse to justify his behavior when it is done "in the name of the church."

*Anonymous*

## Asking the wrong question

IT WAS GOOD TO READ IN "CHRIST AND the Tsunami" (March '05) that someone can be honest with the question, "Why did God allow it?" by answering, "I don't know!" As the author said, not even Jeremiah and Elijah can give us the answer.

But does anyone else feel as I do? Does anyone else wonder if we're asking the wrong question? I keep asking myself, "Where were we humans in all this?"

God gave us a brain and common sense, so why don't we use them? We build cities and homes in flood plains and tornado alleys. We live in the predictable paths of hurricanes or next to volcanoes or on earthquake fault lines. And yet when catastrophe strikes, we ask, "Why

did God permit this? Why didn't He stop it?"

The real questions are, "Why are we so foolish as to build our homes along a coast where seismic waves can strike? Why didn't the authorities have a warning system in place? Why is it we always blame God for our foolishness and expect Him to step in when we blow it?" May I say again, God gave us a brain; let's use it!

I know I could say something here about Satan's role in all this and refer to Rom. 8:22 ("We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time"), but I will leave that to the theologians.

*Rev. David A. Graef  
Valparaiso, Ind.*

## Alms (and more) for the poor

I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING REV.

Wagener wrote in "Remembering the Poor" (March '05). It's what he left out that bothers me.

Certainly almsgiving is an important part of Christian life, but remembering the poor also means Christian advocacy on their behalf. Consider the passage from Isaiah (58:6b–7a) calling for removing the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice (advocacy) and sharing bread with the hungry and sheltering the homeless (almsgiving).

The Biblical prophets often spoke out to rulers on behalf of the hungry, homeless, and oppressed. God's people are called to speak and act in the same way today. We can contact our elected officials, urging action and legislation in line with our Christian beliefs about God's concern for the helpless poor. We can join with other Christian groups that have a proven record of responsible and successful advocacy for the poor.

Almsgiving is essential to the

---

Christian life, and I thank Rev. Wagener for making the case so well in his article. But God wants us to be advocates for the poor as well.

*Robert C. Droege  
Rockville, Md.*

## **Screening out sin**

I WAS INTRIGUED BY THE Q&A COLUMN, “The Sin We’ve Inherited” (March ’05). The column fell just short of stating that sin and death are genetic, implying that sin (and presumably also death) is inherited in a manner analogous to the inheritance of our physical features “and even some diseases.”

Biomedical research has progressed to the point where the exact genetic alterations (DNA mutations) responsible for many inherited human diseases are now known. Consequently, human embryos produced by *in vitro* fertilization can be screened for the presence of the faulty genes before intrauterine implantation, thus avoiding the birth of a child with a devastating and eventually lethal genetic disease for which both parents can be carriers without having the disease themselves. Another consequence of genetic research—research being actively and successfully pursued using “knockout mice”—is the possibility of preventing a specific gene from being inherited.

Thus, continuing the analogy to genetic diseases, it would seem the technology now exists—if only we knew which of the 20,000–25,000 genes in our nuclear DNA is or are responsible for original sin—to remove the sin we’ve inherited or at least avoid passing it on to future generations. On second thought, the “old Adam” likely doesn’t reside in our mitochondrial DNA, which we inherit almost exclusively from our mothers (that is, ultimately, from Eve, but with some inherited mutations).

*David A. Brase, Ph.D.  
Rockville, Md.*



*Dominic Rivkin, a second-year student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, meets with Dr. James Voelz, professor of exegetical theology, between classes. Rivkin will begin a new congregation in the French Valley area of California as a mission planter after this semester ends.*

# THE PRICE OF

*Enrollment grows at our seminaries, but success has a price.*

BY ROLAND LOVSTAD

Late last month, 165 men received their first calls into pastoral ministry—about 26 percent higher than five years ago—the result of 10 years of steady growth at the Synod’s two seminaries in Fort Wayne and St. Louis.

That’s good news for Synod congregations, considering that about 400 congregations are actively calling pastors this spring. (About 400 more congregations are vacant and not calling.) It’s good news, as well, for a Synod that will need pastors and missionaries to grasp its “*Ablaze!*” vision of reaching 100 million people worldwide with the Gospel of Jesus Christ by 2017—a vision that includes starting 2,000 new ministries.

There’s more encouraging news: 250 men received vicarage assignments this spring, meaning they will be available for calls next year—and seminary enrollments continue to grow. During this academic year, there were 873 full-time residential students studying toward ordination—297 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, and 576 at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. (Adding graduate students, deaconess students, and part-time extension students, enrollments totaled 389 at Fort Wayne and 827 at St. Louis.)

## Challenges of changes

In the midst of this success, the seminaries also face an incredibly daunting challenge. Enrollment increases require financial support to assure that these new pastors begin their ministries without excessive educational debts.

“The funding model—the way the church pays for the education of its pastors—has changed over the past 30 years,” explains Mark Hofman, director of development at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. “We are so much more dependent on bequests and gifts.” He says direct gifts accounted for 63 percent of the income at Concordia Seminary during the current academic year. Thirty years ago, it was only 16 percent.

In the past, most of the seminaries’ budgets was supported through the Synod’s national budget, adds Ralph Schmidt, director of development at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. “Forty years ago, [Synod provided] approximately 70 percent at Fort Wayne. Today it’s \$245,000, about 2 percent. We appreciate the Synod’s desire to support us, and we know the Synod is supplying as much as it can with the limited resources it has for national ministries.”

Rev. Glen Thomas, director of seminary relations in St. Louis, comments: “We find scores of people who think their Sunday-

# SUCCESS

morning offering covers the cost of educating seminary students. It is difficult to say without sounding like we're complaining, but the Synod subsidy to the St. Louis seminary is about \$250,000, which would support the tuition of less than 15 students. This is the fiscal reality we have."

Emphasizing that the Synod was formed by congregations that saw the necessity of working together to educate pastors, Rev. Scott Klemz, director of seminary relations at Fort Wayne, adds, "If the church can provide for the cost of a seminary's education, it provides a realm for giving students a refuge to be formed as pastors. And that comes back to the congregations."

With less subsidy from the Synod, the seminaries have increased efforts to raise gifts and donations. The seminaries use those gifts to provide tuition support for their students. Hence, the need grows as every new student enrolls.

Thomas says this year's tuition at St. Louis was \$17,400, of which the seminary pledged to provide \$11,400 through seminary funds, support from home districts and congregations, and other sources. With this support, a student's out-of-pocket expense was \$6,000, plus an estimated \$1,500 in books.

At Fort Wayne the tuition was \$12,825 this year. Schmidt says a significant amount is granted to a student. The seminary estimates that fees, books, and supplies add \$1,645 to the direct cost-plus housing and personal expenses. "In essence, less than 10 percent of the seminary's budget comes from tuition that students actually pay



*Dr. Cameron A. MacKenzie, professor of historical theology, teaches a class of future LCMS pastors at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.*

out of their own pockets," he observes.

In addition to tuition, students have living expenses. Because a majority of seminary students today are married with children, the housing and personal expenses vary considerably. For example, Fort Wayne estimates an annual budget for a family of four to be \$35,545 including tuition, fees, books and living expenses. Both seminaries also assist students by sponsoring food and clothing banks stocked with free items donated by area congregations.

"Honestly, student debt is very troublesome," Schmidt adds. Noting that a majority of students are second-career, he says, "They have given up jobs. They have families. Even if their wives work, trying to raise a family while the husband is a full-time student is very difficult. They are on the hearts of seminary staff."

Tuition support has removed a barrier that kept some from studying for the pastoral ministry, according to Hofman. "Enrollment growth is outpacing our current

ability to raise money for student aid. This is a reality we have to consider as we plan our financial aid commitment each year."

Says Schmidt: "We need more people to understand realities under which we live today so we can have more regular support year in and year out." Speaking of donors, he adds, "We are dealing with the most wonderful people in the world. Their hearts are with the church and with their Lord. It's a partnership that is bigger than the seminaries."

## TO LEARN MORE

**F**or more information about supporting education of future pastors, contact:

- ❖ Jeff Craig-Meyer, LCMS Joint Seminary Fund, (888) 930-4438.
- ❖ Rev. Ralph Schmidt, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, (877) 287-4338.
- ❖ Mark Hofman, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (800) 822-5287.

## SHARING THE GOSPEL ‘DOWNTOWN’

Jason Rust is beginning a mission among the young professionals and empty-nesters who are residents of rapidly developing loft communities in downtown St. Louis.

Recently, the second-year student at Concordia Seminary finished a Bible study to prepare a core of mature Christians to lead this ministry. It is part of his fieldwork with Trinity Lutheran Church, a city congregation seeking to establish a satellite ministry downtown. He sets up a mobile office in a downtown café to be near the people who don’t “have physical or social needs,” Rust says, “finding a way to make the Gospel relevant to them.”

In his classes, he finds an outlet to discuss his experiences. “It’s a great education to be learning from the best theological minds,” he observes. “I’m receiving a firm foundation to apply this understanding to ministry.”

— R.C.L



*As a field worker with historic Trinity Lutheran Church, Jason Rust, a second-year seminarian, sets up a mobile office in downtown St. Louis to reach a growing population of young professionals and empty-nesters who live in newly developed loft apartments in former downtown warehouses and office buildings. “I’m receiving a firm foundation that I can apply to ministry,” he observes.*

## Funding, recruitment, quality

Funding models are high on the agenda of the LCMS Board for Pastoral Education (BPE) as it seeks to improve the financial stability of the Synod’s two seminaries.

The BPE was formed by the 2004 convention, which also declared immediate priority for seminary funding. Dr. L. Dean Hempelmann, BPE executive director, quotes from Res. 4-02A, saying it charges the board “to engage the entire church for counsel and support in resolving this crisis.”

“The church is saying loud and clear that it’s willing to step up to the plate to support seminaries in what has become a critical situation,” he says. “We are already studying current funding models to ascertain what the seminaries are presently doing in development.” The resolution calls for a plan to be put into place during this triennium.

“The LMCS Board of Directors desires to support our seminaries and doubled the subsidy to seminaries for a total of \$500,000 this fiscal year,” Hempelmann says. He adds that a total of \$1,050,000 also went to the seminaries through the Joint Seminary Fund, which is administered by the Board for Pastoral Education.

Along with funding, recruitment also requires participation by the entire church, Hempelmann believes. “The seminaries have to work continually on recruitment, but it should not be left to them. The church responds in homes and then in congregations by identifying, encouraging, and supporting men who can serve in the pastoral ministry. Again, the church wants to address this issue.”

An informal study of actuarial tables and the experience of Worker Benefit Plans indicate that if the seminaries continue to graduate pastors at current levels, the supply

## GRACE: A LIBERATING MESSAGE

From St. George, Utah, Rev. Matthew Nelson serves Mt. Zion, Kanab, and Good Shepherd, Richfield, both mission parishes. His ministry includes Bible classes for unchurched people, including inactive Mormons.

The 2004 graduate of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, emphasizes study of Luke's gospel—with lots of discussion. "The message of grace in Jesus apart from works is exciting and liberating news to these folks," Nelson says.

Outreach is part of Lutheran heritage, he adds. "The goal is not simply Bible study, but Christian baptism and membership in one of our churches. Word and Sacrament are at the center of what we do."

Nelson believes seminaries are "absolutely critical" to the Synod, stating, "They need to be supported and treated like the jewels they are."

— R.C.L



*Rev. Matthew Nelson, a 2004 graduate of the Fort Wayne seminary, often rides a motorcycle to cover the broad distances between the two parishes he serves in Kanab and Richfield, Utah. His ministry includes Bible classes for the unchurched in which he emphasizes the study of Luke's Gospel with lots of discussion.*

of active ministers in 20 years will be less than half of what it is today. Considering that most new pastors are now in their mid-30s to early 40s when they begin their ministries—plus informed estimates of deaths, disabilities, terminations, and retirements—the study projects a net loss of more than 100 active pastors each year.

One approach to recruiting, Hempelmann says, is through the "What a Way" initiative. A new Web site ([www.whataway.org](http://www.whataway.org)) offers resources and materials for prospective workers, plus information for congregations and current church workers. The site is part of an effort to recruit—and retain—pastors and other church workers.

The BPE continues to monitor what Hempelmann calls "a balanced supply and demand" for pastors. He adds, "Of course, we need more pastors if we want to be a mission church to go to every location to preach and teach Christ and His cross."

Meanwhile, Hempelmann is confident that LCMS pastoral education is strong in theological foundation and relevant to the needs of the church in contemporary society.

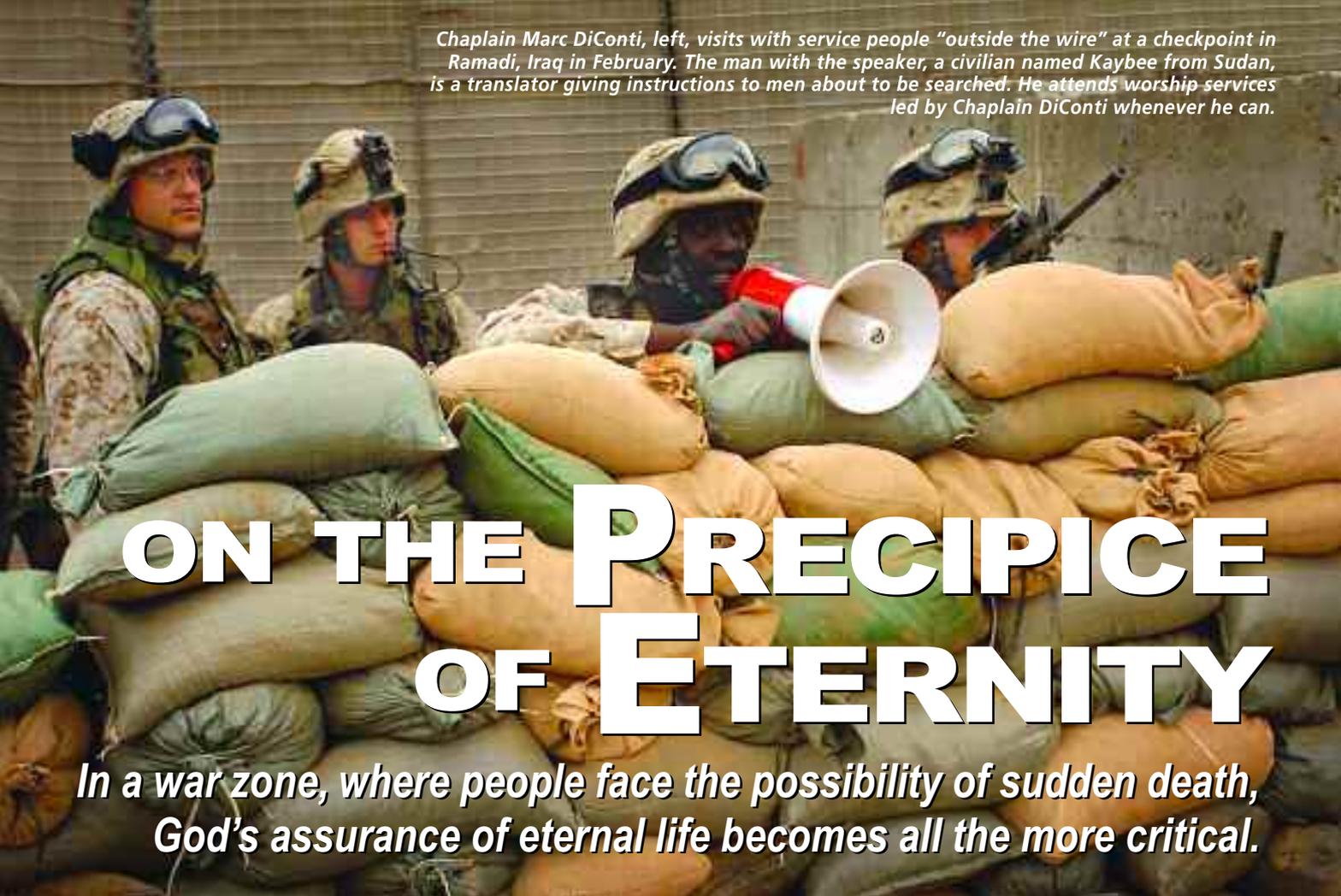
Guiding pastoral education—as well as pre-seminary and post-seminary continuing education—are the LCMS Themes for Pastoral Education, resulting from four years of interviews with church leaders, laity, synodical colleges, and seminary faculty. The themes deal with academic readiness, pastoral practice, spiritual formation, mission outreach, the church and culture, community of faith, service of the baptized, administration, experienced faculty, life-long learning, flexible approaches to education, and international exchange.

Hempelmann says the two seminaries are collaborating around a "wholehearted endorsement" of these themes. "There is a real unity and from that stems a focus for unity in our church. It is God's Word as taught—and caught—in seminary education that ultimately unites us, and the strong fortress of the Word is found in seminary life."



*Roland C. Lovstad is a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Perryville, Mo.*

*Chaplain Marc DiConti, left, visits with service people “outside the wire” at a checkpoint in Ramadi, Iraq in February. The man with the speaker, a civilian named Kaybee from Sudan, is a translator giving instructions to men about to be searched. He attends worship services led by Chaplain DiConti whenever he can.*



# ON THE PRECIPICE OF ETERNITY

*In a war zone, where people face the possibility of sudden death, God’s assurance of eternal life becomes all the more critical.*

BY MARC G. DICONTI

**J**ust under seven years ago, I sat in my pastor’s study in Laurel, Mont., contemplating a move to military chaplaincy. I had long desired to follow my father into the Navy, but the Lord gave me another path.

When the opportunity came later to enter the Navy as a chaplain, I never gave much thought to the idea that I could minister in a combat zone. Even though my eight-month deployment aboard the USS Princeton to the Persian Gulf at the outbreak of the Iraq War was considered a “hostile fire zone,” it could not prepare me for what I experience now. I am assigned to a Marine infantry unit—the storied 2nd Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment—that has been in every major conflict since WWI.

## Physical warfare

Seventy miles west of Baghdad is the city of Ar-Ramadi, the provincial capital of Al-Anbar. It’s far enough from conveniences to be avoided by most reporters, those who come to Iraq to get their stories and leave. Ramadi is part of the violent Sunni Triangle where extremist Muslim insurgents are most active among the Sunni Muslims, a minority in this largely Shiite Muslim country.

Since our arrival, our battalion of 1,200 Marines and sailors has engaged the insurgents in numerous firefights on the streets in the city center and in residential neighborhoods. We have been attacked by IEDs (improvised explosive devices) made from 155mm shells and remotely detonated by cell phones, RPGs (rocket propelled grenades), mortars of various sizes, and small-

and large-caliber weapons. From early September 2004, when Ramadi became our temporary home, more than 200 in the battalion have been wounded. Some returned home for surgery, prosthetics, and rehabilitation; others healed “in country” and returned to duty. Still others—15 in all—were killed.

My normal week is spent between the battalion’s three bases in the city. Every few days, I travel in the “combat train,” a convoy of Humvees and 7-ton trucks that runs supplies between the bases. I jump aboard and carry out my migrant ministry, providing worship services, Bible studies, counseling, an empathetic ear. Through it all, I continually gauge troop morale.

My travels with the convoys have been harrowing. My Humvee has been shot at three times—once on Christmas Eve—and IED-ed twice.

One was a vehicle-borne suicide bomb that went off just after we passed, exploding just before the Humvee following us. Mortars land in the bases with such regularity that around sunset, the Marines humorously call the time on their watch "Mortar:30." Outside activities at dusk are kept to a minimum.

## Spiritual warfare

Coinciding with the physical war is a very real spiritual war over the hearts and minds of each soldier, sailor, and Marine. I understand that, for every moment we are here, every soul is on the precipice of eternity. Those whose faith is not in Christ's work of righteousness face a torment and separation from God forever. For these I am most fervent in my prayers and work to be used by God to win them for Jesus.

After each death, in private ministry with individuals and with the men of the platoons of those killed, and in every official memorial, I have proclaimed the message of Jesus' love, comfort, and promise and an invitation for His care. It has been *here*, where sin abounds at its worst and brings violent death, that God's grace abounds all the more, as St. Paul assures us in Rom. 5:20.

The Holy Spirit has shown the power of His love in ministry to reach the hardest of hearts and the most closed of minds. Many may not have had an interest in religion, but *here* they have opened up to the relationship Jesus has offered them. What a privilege it has been to bear the message of Christ, whether preaching the cross in Christian worship or sharing His Good News during impromptu visits in the "hooches" of troops.

Looking past a makeshift altar-and-pulpit combo of a box set on a table, the often dirty, exhausted, stubble-faced, and spiritually hungry

enter a chow-hall-turned-sanctuary to sing and hear the Word. These Marines' and sailors' Sunday service may occur on a Friday, Saturday, or Monday, in the evening or the morning. But they not only make a joyful noise as they praise God in songs, they also receive spiritual renewal in

life and has since been instructed and baptized (on Thanksgiving Day) into the faith.

Another young Marine, who at one time attended a Lutheran church, returned to his unit after a short stay in Germany to heal from a shrapnel wound. He came back



the life and promises of God's Word.

It is a beautiful experience to see God working in the hearts of many of these men. A daily brotherhood in action has developed through hard times where Jesus heals, encourages, strengthens, and enlivens.

Faith has been engendered and increased through many close calls when God extended His mercy.

A Navy corpsman came to faith in Christ after returning from an early-morning patrol and finding his quarters' door and bed shredded by shrapnel from a mortar. If he had not been called that night for patrol, he would have died. He came to trust in Christ for his *eternal*

eager to know God more deeply. He and I completed his adult confirmation classes in February.

Mature Christians among the troops have been emboldened to share their faith and bring non-

*Many may not have had an interest in religion, but here they have opened up to the relationship Jesus has offered them.*

believers to worship services. One recent Christian convert, who was wounded in action and then baptized just before Christmas, was used to lead a fellow Marine to new faith in Jesus after a worship service.

*[A chaplain's] "counseling skills will be pushed to the limit," because a chaplain's ministry mostly involves "people in crisis."*



**Chaplain Marc DiConti, standing (below), leads a memorial service for four Marines who died in combat. Their rifles, helmets, and dog tags are displayed in the traditional memorial stand.**



**Worship services are especially poignant in a war zone where young military people are suddenly face-to-face with eternity and want to hear God's Word above the noise of war. An improvised altar (not shown) and a chow-hall sanctuary are characteristic of war-zone worship services as U.S. Navy Chaplain Lt. Marc DiConti goes to where the troops are to minister to their spiritual and emotional needs.**



As this is written, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has 18 chaplains serving in war zones: 13 in Iraq, three in Afghanistan, and two in Kuwait.

But in a war zone or not, military chaplains have a challenging, yet rewarding, ministry, says Chaplain Mark J. Schreiber, director of the Synod's Ministry to the Armed Forces.

"Your counseling skills will be pushed to the limit," because a chaplain's ministry mostly involves "people in crisis," he said. Tragedies are common, especially during wartime, and "chaplains are often there to pick up the pieces shortly after the event. People who die in the service don't die after a lengthy illness—they die young and they die violently. And [chaplains] often have to go and speak to the family about what just happened.

"Death certainly happens in the parish, but not with the frequency and intensity of the situations in the military."

Chaplains might be called upon to conduct worship services at sea, on the side of a hill, or from the back of a jeep. They minister to people with wide-ranging backgrounds—many of them non-Christian—with ample opportunities for outreach. And they do get to travel the world.

Of the 246 LCMS pastors currently serving as military chaplains, 97 are on "active duty" (including 17 "mobilized Reservists") with the Army, Navy, and Air Force anywhere in the world, including war zones like Iraq



## Seeing God's work

There have been so many heart-warming experiences in this ministry.

God has granted me a rapport with my military family here that might take years to develop in a parish setting. This rapport has brought many to me with their prayer requests and confidential concerns. So many of these occasions have been opportunities for God to work through the Office of the Keys and for the means of grace to do its deep, eternal, and loving work of offering forgiveness

and life in Christ.

Faith has been engendered and increased through many close calls when God extended His mercy.

When I am alone, usually while laying my head in one of three places I happen to sleep during this deployment, I often pray for my safe return home early this Spring, to reunite with Jan (my wife of 23 years), and to fellowship once more with my children. As well, I seriously contemplate a

return to the civilian parish work—knowing I've been enriched through my chaplain's ministry experiences. But for now, I acknowledge God's desire to use me where I am at presently, on the winning side in this spiritual warfare.

and Afghanistan. (Navy chaplains serve the Marine Corps as well.)

Also on the Synod's roster are 65 Reserve chaplains, 33 who serve in the National Guard and Air National Guard, 24 with the Civil Air Patrol, and 27 Veterans Administration chaplains.

Schreiber says there is always a need for more chaplains. His Ministry to the Armed Forces office, which operates as part of LCMS World Mission, recruits, interviews, and approves chaplain candidates.

In addition to its work with military chaplains, the Ministry to the Armed Forces office also provides, through its "Ministry-by-Mail" program, devotional materials to LCMS members serving in the military. The free packets, mailed four times a year, include *Portals of Prayer* and "So Help Me God," a newsletter produced by the Synod's armed forces ministry.

Schreiber said the 5,800 people now receiving the packets represent a small portion of the LCMS members who serve in the military, and he encouraged others to forward the names and addresses of their family members and friends in the military to his office. The Missouri Synod, he said, is the only church body that communicates regularly with its active-duty members.

To submit names of LCMS members who are on active duty in the military, or for more information about the military chaplaincy, contact the Ministry to the Armed Forces at (800) 433-3954, Ext. 1337, or [lcmschaps@lcms.org](mailto:lcmschaps@lcms.org).

— Paula Schlueter Ross

**Staff Sergeant Rick, left, was Chaplain Marc DiConti's convoy driver. He was drawn back to faith far from home and amidst war when DiConti asked him to read a Scripture pericope at a worship service.**



*Lt. Marc G. DiConti is a chaplain in the United States Navy and was with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. He returned home from Iraq March 30, 2005. He is a member of New Community Lutheran Church, Temecula, Calif.*

## HOW TO OVERCOME SATAN

BY ANDREW SIMCAK JR.

Satan, or the devil, is one of the three great spiritual enemies that Christians encounter in their daily lives—the other two are the world and our own sinful nature.

One of the problems today's Christians face is that so many deny the existence of Satan. A recent nationwide survey of religious beliefs released by the Barna Research Group shows an alarmingly high number of church members whose beliefs fall far short of orthodox Christianity. Only 47 percent of all adults surveyed acknowledge the existence of Satan, despite the clear Biblical teaching.

While most Americans queried by Barna still believe in God as the all-powerful Creator, a mere 21 percent of Lutherans (17 percent of Catholics, 18 percent of Methodists, 20 percent of Episcopalians, and 22 percent of the Presbyterians) told Barna that they thought Satan was real.

A Lutheran theologian wrote that this “tells us that even Lutherans are utterly out of step with Martin Luther, to whom the Devil was very much a reality.”

Even the Christians who know Satan is real confront other major problems. We tend to take Satan too lightly, and we are not willing to understand and effectively combat and overcome his temptations. This is dangerous, not only for this life, but it can also rob us of God's gift of eternal life.

It is important to know and believe that Satan is alive and well. Satan and all the other evil angels were originally holy—sinless angels created by God. Everything that God created was very good as

we learn in Ex. 20:11 and Gen. 1:31.

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In your own words, explain how holy angels become evil angels. Read 2 Peter 2:4.

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God's Word does not tell us the nature of their sin, but because they sinned, they become the enemies of God and all Christians.

It was Satan who tempted Eve to sin in the Garden of Eden. Go to Gen. 3:1–7 and read again how sin entered the world when our first parents disobeyed the clear command of God and succumbed to the subtle temptation of Satan.

Satan himself tempted our Lord at the beginning of His ministry. His temptations are related in Matt. 4:1–11. What were his three temptations of Christ?

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What is Satan's purpose in tempting us according to 1 Peter 5:8?

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James reminds us that we need to take definite action against Satan in James 4:7. To overcome Satan and his temptations we need to put on the whole armor of God. Read Eph. 6:10–18 and describe each of the pieces of spiritual armor with which God provides us.

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Our strength is the result of what Christ did for us through His death and resurrection. Read 1 John 3:8 and Rev. 12:10.

The power to fight and overcome Satan and his subtle, slick temptations is ours by faith in Jesus Christ, who overcame and conquered Satan. Examine 1 Peter 5:9. What comfort can you take from these words?

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How comforting and assuring it is for us not only to know that Jesus, during His life, was tempted by Satan as we are, but also to know with certainty that Jesus conquered Satan through His dying and rising again. Because Jesus overcame Satan, we can also overcome Satan by faith in Him as our Savior.



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## TERRI SCHIAVO AND LIVING WILLS

**D**r. Kieschnick's commentary printed below was shared earlier with secular media and posted on the President's Page on the LCMS Web site. —Ed.

The long, tortured saga of Terri Schiavo finally has ended. Our prayers continue to be lifted to our gracious God for her family members, friends, and supporters from around the world, many of whom had never personally known Terri yet offered prayer and support during her life and now express grief at her death.

It took two weeks for Terri to die following the removal of her feeding tube. This would seem to indicate that depriving her of food and water did not *permit* her to die

*Are there times when choosing not to artificially prolong life is acceptable in the eyes of God?*

but rather *caused* her to die. As Christians, our aim should be always to care, never to kill. This is particularly critical when significant doubt exists regarding the actual irreversible nature of the patient's illness and his or her ongoing desire to live.

But what if we, unlike Terri, should enter irretrievably and unquestionably, without the shadow of a doubt, into the process of death? Would our end-of-life wishes be clearly known to those deciding our fate? Should we create a living will? Does our church body approve of living wills? Are there times when choosing not to artificially prolong life is acceptable in the eyes of God?

Allow me to share some insight

on The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's collective thinking concerning living wills:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod regards it as an appropriate and commendable ethical procedure for people to draw up living wills (or advanced directives, as they are now more commonly called).

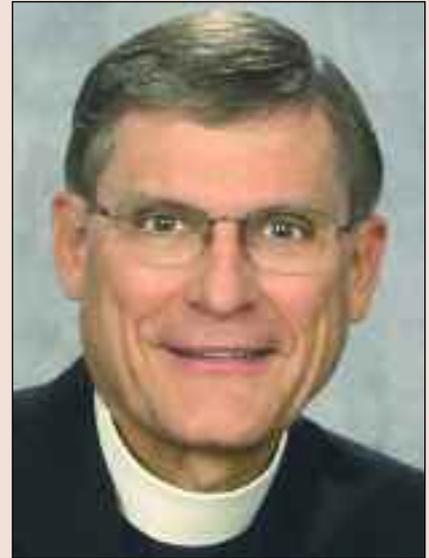
Obviously, the decision to prepare a living will is deeply personal, and the decision to activate one is profound. A person's living will should be implemented only when the point has been reached where medical interventions are no longer effective expressions of care but instead involve burdensome, unnatural prolongation of a person's life and artificial delay of the natural process of death.

Christians always strive to protect and preserve life. Again, our aim is always to care, never to kill.

At the same time, we are not required by God's Word to stretch out or unnaturally delay the dying process for as long as modern technology can keep a heart beating. When the God-given powers of the body to sustain its own life can no longer function, and doctors in their professional judgment conclude that there is no real hope for recovery, even with life-support instruments, a Christian may in good conscience "let nature take its course."

Christians may disagree about how the principle "always to care, never to kill" may apply to specific situations. They may conscientiously take different positions on what can and should be included in a living will that prescribes what medical interventions should or should not be used.

It should be noted, too, that different factors present them-



selves from case to case. Generally, however, in the final analysis, we rely on and trust the informed judgment of our medical professionals (who ought to be aware of and respect our wishes on this subject) and commend the matter in prayer to our loving and gracious God.

As our church body's Commission on Theology has stated, "Any decisions made in this highly complex area, and any actions taken that may later appear to have been wrong, have been redeemed by that forgiveness which is available to all who put their trust in the work and merits of mankind's Savior and Redeemer."

Finally, I commend to you the words of our Savior, Jesus Christ, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25–26).

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

### **Jerry Kieschnick**

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

John 3:16–17

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