

The Lutheran WITNESS

NOVEMBER 2002

VOL. 121 NO. 11



*The Church Is
a Mercy Place*

Also:

*Lutherans
(Still) Care*

*Food, Clothing
and Jesus*

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The Lutheran WITNESS

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

NOVEMBER 2002

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Terrorism in focus

Dr. Veith once again offers a clear-headed view of matters at hand. He has a way of taking what is often blurry and pulling it into sharp focus.

*Cary Schwarz
Salmon, Idaho*

DR. GENE EDWARD VEITH DID AN EXCELLENT job pointing out the depth of our current Lutheran spiritual challenge ("What Hath Terror Wrought?," Sept. '02). Unless we continue to distinguish between Law and Gospel, we will gradually resort to pluralism. As we know, it is only through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ that anyone can be saved from eternal destruction. All others will be damned.

*Bruce Barthel
Amarillo, Texas*

VEITH SEEMS TO VIEW MUSLIMS AND Islam from his own perceptions as a Christian. The bit of amateur psychology on Mohamed Atta, including some juicy revelations, in my opinion is really bad. The simplistic description of "the world's religions," completely in traditional Christian categories ("legalistic," "save themselves," "being good and working your way to heaven") could be regarded as a sign of the inadequate knowledge regarding those religions (including various forms of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc., as well as Islam, regarding which he might well become familiar with Roland Miller's fine CPH publication, Muslim Friends, on the complex subject of salvation therein).

Do you not have editorial help in improving the quality of what you publish?

*Rev. Luther T. Engelbrecht
Seattle, Wash.*

THANK YOU, DR. VEITH, FOR EXPOSING the heresy of religious relativism. Sadly, this "politically correct" religion is making its way even into the Missouri Synod. I recall attending a Sunday-school class in which the pastor advanced the idea that Jesus

isn't the only way to heaven. I paused before the cross that day and silently apologized for what I had heard. I brought to mind Christ's words, "No one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6).

What such pastors and followers of political correctness don't seem to realize is that their all-inclusive view of heaven isn't doing Christians or Muslims any favors. I don't believe that the followers of Islam want a room in *His* Father's house, nor do they want to share eternity alongside Christian "infidels."

*Cheryl Hanna
Hudson, Ohio*

Ethical questions

I WAS BOTH PLEASED AND DISAPPOINTED by "What Child Is This?" (Sept. '02). I was pleased by its clear stand against reproductive cloning. But it seems to say that *in vitro* fertilization is ethical because "as long as a child is conceived by the sperm of the husband and the egg of the wife in faithful marriage, the fundamentals of Biblical guidance are being observed," as though this is the only ethical question to be considered.

Three other ethical questions are worth considering:

1. Embryos created by *in vitro* fertilization are more likely to miscarry than are embryos that are conceived naturally. Is it ethical to use *in vitro* fertilization if every baby conceived by this method has a higher chance of dying after an attempted implantation?

2. *In vitro* fertilization creates

numerous embryos and then attempts to implant some of them in the mother. If 10 embryos are created, five of the most promising might be placed in the uterus with the hope that one might implant. If a successful implantation is created, the five that were not included in the implantation attempt are frozen (for possible future use) or are killed if they are no longer needed. Is it ethical to kill an unborn child just because it is no longer needed?

3. If more than the desired number of embryos implant, selective abortion is often used to remove the unwanted embryos from a woman's uterus. Is it OK to abort excess children if too many implant during *in vitro* procedures?

I think the answer to all these questions is a resounding no! Human life is simply too precious to be discarded just because it is no longer wanted. That is why I was saddened by this article's lack of clarity on the moral issues involved in *in vitro* fertilization.

*Dennis Di Mauro
Herndon, Va.*

Dennis Di Mauro is director of Lutherans For Life of the Mid-Atlantic States.—Ed.

We need them

THE AUGUST "LIFELINE" ARTICLE from the anonymous author who wrote of his life being on "Cruise Control" did not have an ending. We don't know where he is, and that's as it should be. But I hope that when he feels ready, he will go on to the seminary. We need men like him who know about sin and grace and who are willing to share the love of God which they themselves have received.

*Rev. Stephen Vogt
Hamburg, N.J.*

Middle East conflict

I SHARE ANN BRYANT'S CONCERN ABOUT "uninformed persons" regarding the conflict in the Middle East ("Letters," July '02). Many who travel to Israel obtain one view of Israeli-Palestinian issues because they visit only "holy stones" (tourist sites), usually with an Israeli-oriented guide, and don't sit and sup with "holy people" (1 Peter 2:9) who live in the Holy Land, fellow sisters and brothers in Christ, 99.9 percent of whom are Arab.

Contra her questioning of Lutheran Pastor Mitri Raheb's truthfulness, note that in April when he was detained by 45 Israeli soldiers, he offered keys to all the doors; instead, they blasted open some 30 doors, destroyed computers and files and a copy machine, severed phone lines, wrote obscene graffiti and destroyed Christian symbols. A Lutheran World Federation delegation presented Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres a list of damages to Lutheran-church property amounting to a million dollars, half of which was to the Lutheran church in Bethlehem.

Bryant is concerned that a *Lutheran Witness* news article did not provide an Israeli perspective. Amira Hass, a Jewish journalist writing for *Ha'aretz*, a leading Israeli daily, comments (April 24, 2002), "This [destruction] is not a whim, or crazed vengeance, by this or that unit, nor a personal vandalistic urge of a soldier whose buddies didn't dare stop him. This was a decision made to vandalize the civic, administrative, cultural infrastructure developed by Palestinian society."

As a person and a pastor, I am angered that the Christian community in our country closes its eyes to the suffering of fellow Christians, choosing to walk by on the other side (Luke 10:31-32) and uncritically accepting an Israeli line that damns and punishes all Palestinians.

*Rev. Arnie Voigt
Littleton, Colo.*

THE CHURCH IS A MERCY PLACE!

*Acts of mercy are part and parcel of what
our Lord calls His Church to be.*

by Matthew C. Harrison

"I'm goin' t' die! I'm goin' t' die!"

Zion Lutheran Church lives her life in the heart of Fort Wayne's most troubled neighborhood. But even this congregation was shocked at what was happening this morning.

The Sanctus had just been belted out as the massive pipe organ shook the plaster of the old, ornate gothic sanctuary. From behind the altar I had seen him come in, sit on the lectern side, then move to the front of the pulpit side. As the Lord's Prayer ended, he rose, faced the congregation, and began blowing kisses, shouting, *"I'm goin' t' die!"*

Behind the altar, arms outstretched, facing the congregation, I moved only my index finger (as frantically as one digit can be moved!), directing four rather perplexed ushers to deal with the man. They moved closer. He wobbled. Wide, intoxicated eyes peered at them with fear. His large body became tense, ready to fight or flee as he listed backward, cornered.

Not wanting a scene, the ushers paused and looked helplessly back to me. "Now what, Pastor?" I read in their eyes.



Complexities are common at the rough edge of the church's life—her mercy edge—as she is confronted by real physical and spiritual need.

Jesus faced these complexities, misunderstandings and challenges. Yet He never failed to proclaim His Gospel of forgiveness *and* bear witness to Himself as the Divine Savior by His works of mercy. Crowds pursued Him for bread—not the bread of life—yet He delivered both (John 6).

The apostolic church faced similar challenges. Was the church's task "Word and Sacrament," *or* caring for the needy?



Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example of mercy in His ministry as He proclaimed the Gospel and cared for the needy.

In affirming the essential nature of the church's marks (Gospel and Sacrament), we dare not miss the fact that love and mercy toward the needy mark the church's *corporate* life. If not, she risks denial of the very Gospel and Sacraments that constitute her.

The apostles ordained the seven to "wait tables" (i.e., give bread to the widows) that the apostles might not "give up preaching the Word" (Acts 6:2). The apostles established a church office to care for the needy and for those who came to her with spiritual and physical need (Gal. 6:10).

From Jesus, to the apostolic church, to the Missouri Synod, it has always been so.

But why?

Some might answer: "Missions! We care in order to evangelize the needy. Find the need, meet it, and grow the church."

I am not happy at all with this idea. It's very pragmatic, very American, but not particularly Lutheran.

The Bible teaches that eternal life is only through faith in Christ and His cross, so evangelism is an essential part of the church's life (Matt. 28:19). But it smacks of "bait and switch" to me. Jesus proclaimed the Gospel *and* cared for the needy because that's who He *is* as Mercy Incarnate. Mercy responds to human need and suffering, whether spiritual or physical.

The church doesn't reach out to those in need because it's a guaranteed way to fill pews. Proclaiming Jesus and loving our neighbor has to do with who and what the church *is* as the body of Christ. Where proclamation of the Gospel or acts of love and mercy are missing, the church's life is not what Christ intended it to be. Mere "social gospel" substitutes our work for Christ's. But proclamation absent love renders us a mere "clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13).

Why ought the church show mercy to the needy? Because it's Christ's command. "Love your neighbor as yourself."

I don't want to minimize the importance of the Law of God in guiding us as His church. And yet, not only is the Law not the proper motivation for Christian acts of mercy, the church shows mercy to the needy for reasons deeper than mere command. The church performs acts of mercy because this is what she's given to be—a mercy place.

The saints in Matthew 25 aren't even aware of how they served Christ by serving the needy. They did these things because they were a people of mercy. Wilhelm Loehe (so tremendously influential in the founding of our Synod, institutions of mercy and the deaconess movement) expressed this beautifully: "God's mercy is divine love meeting need. When divine mercy meets human sin, that mercy becomes the grace of forgiveness. When divine love meets human suffering, it becomes merciful care and healing."

Why ought the church care for those in need? The skeptic might say: "I'm still not convinced it should. The church should be about preaching and the administra-

tion of the Sacraments, period." Well, even the skeptic would agree that each *individual* has the mandate to be merciful to others within his or her vocation. Loving our neighbor is a large part of the priesthood of the baptized.

As a clear example of mercy as the church's *corporate* task, consider St. Paul's collection for the needy



Parish nurse Karen Hardecopf visits Glenn Corniels, a fellow member of Cross Lutheran Church, Yorkville, Ill., and a nursing home resident.

church in Jerusalem (1Cor. 16:1ff; Acts 11:28; 2 Cor. 8:1–15, 9:12–14; and Acts 24:7). Individuals provided gifts. These gifts were collected by congregations and even by national churches (Macedonia). More than that, they were delivered to the church in Jerusalem by none other than the apostle Paul.

Martin Luther wrote in the Smalcald Articles: "The church cannot be better ruled and preserved than if we all live under one head, Christ ... and keep diligently together in unity of teaching, faith, Sacraments, prayers and works of love."

About the Cover:

This mosaic of Christ's face was created with photos from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, and some historical Lutheran art. For your support, you can receive a poster of this mosaic, while supplies last. Contact Anna Lockwood, (800) 325-7912, ext. 1672 for more information.



Luther left us stirring descriptions of the church as a mercy place, and of her Gospel-driven motivation to be merciful. The Reformer often speaks of Christ's incarnation and sacrificial death as our motivation to be merciful to the needy—including the non-believer. He wrote to the Duke of Saxony, who was ill:

“Our Lord and Savior Jesus has left us a commandment which applies equally to all Christians, namely, that we are to render ... the words of mercy to those who are afflicted, ... and that we are visit the sick, try to free the captives, and do similar things for our neighbor so that the evils of the present may be somewhat lessened. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself gave us the brightest example of this commandment

when, because of His infinite love for the race of men, He descended from the bosom of the Father into our misery and our prison, that is, into our flesh

and our most wretched life, and took upon Himself the penalty for our sins so that we might be saved. ... And while we have the duty to visit and console all who are afflicted with sickness, we are especially obligated to those of the household of faith.”

His comments in “The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ” of 1519 are a “must read” in order to understand the church's work of mercy as part of the church's corporate life. Luther offers an antidote for a individualistic “Jesus and me” piety regarding the Lord's Supper:

“There your heart must go out in love and devotion and learn that this sacrament is a sacrament of love, and that love and service are given you and you again must render love and service to Christ and His needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in His holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing; you must fight, work, pray, and if you cannot do more, have heartfelt sympathy.”

“You must fight, work, pray. ...” There are no words more apt for describing the church's challenge to be a “mercy place” today. It

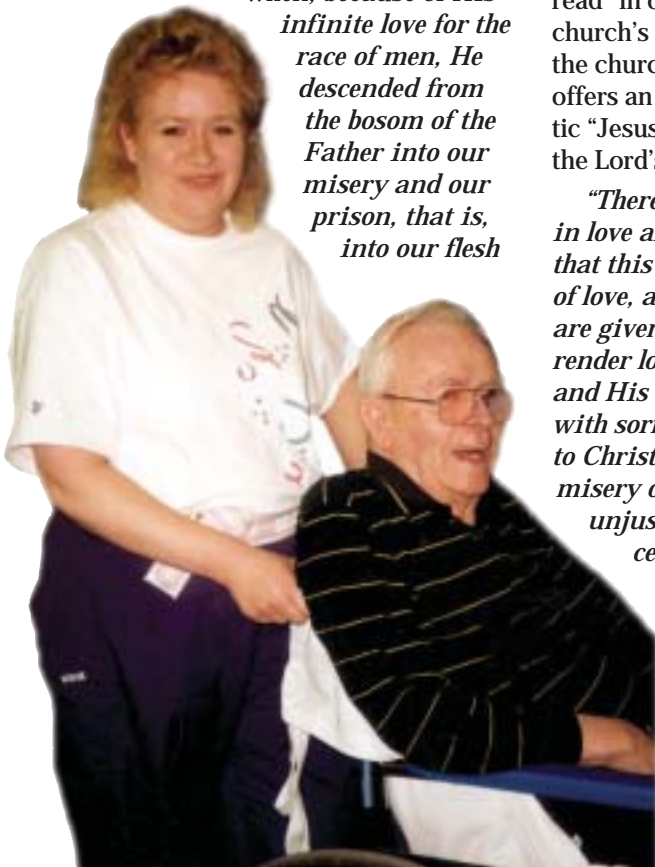


Deaconess Audrey Vanderbles (right) visits with a hospital patient in St. Louis as part of her ministry to share Christ's love and mercy.

is often difficult for a parish to understand its life as one that receives Christ's gifts at altar, font and pulpit, then moves *out* to the world “in fervent love for all.”

There has never been a more complex era for Lutheran institutions of mercy. They sorely need and want to be reconnected with congregations. We, through the LCMS World Relief, have opportunities the world over to share the mercy of Christ in word and deed. But there is so very much more that can be done, such tremendous need to rethink what it means to be Lutheran and merciful as institutions of care, and as congregations, districts and Synod. There is need for us to revisit what it means to “cooperate in externals” with others, Christian or not. We must never sacrifice our clear Confessional and Biblical Lutheran commitments, while clearly recognizing the breadth of “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.”

Where shall we find the where-withal for the tasks at hand in this complex world?



Kim Meade helps Dwayne Boesch get to dinner. Boesch is a resident at the Lutheran Retirement Home of Southern Minnesota in Truman, Minnesota.

“What do we do now, Pastor?”
The ushers’ eyes were pleading.
The entire congregation was
frozen in time, silent. I left the altar.
Soon I had extended my arm around
this confused man’s shoulders.
“Friend, we are really glad that you
are here with us. Let me help you.”

His tension eased as I literally
folded him into the green Trinity-
season chasuble I was wearing. It
was ample enough to cover us both.
Not a snicker, not a smirk marked
the faces of the silent observers as
we made our way to the rear of the
sanctuary. I handed him to others,
and returned to the altar. The “sacra-
ment of love” commenced. After the
service I sought him out. He had
slipped away. I never saw him again.

I think that somehow he knew we were a “mercy
place.” Yet, to this day, I have a nagging visceral disquiet
about him. We failed him.

Yet much more ample than that chasuble that cov-
ered this unworthy servant of Christ and that desperate
soul trapped by sin, death and devil, is Holy Baptism.
How shall we deal with our consciences disquieted by
our failures at mercy? Where shall we find the strength
of faith and fortitude as the church to be evermore
what Christ has made us and called us to be: A mercy
place? How shall we face the complexities of remaining



Chaplain Ed Watson, of Lutheran Ministries Association, brings a smile to the face of a resident at McLaran Skilled Care, a long-term-care facility in the city of St. Louis.

faithful to our beautiful Lutheran confession in today’s
vexing world? Luther has an answer:

“We must hold boldly and fearlessly to our baptism,
and hold it up against all sins and terrors of conscience,
and humbly say, ‘I know full well that I have not a sin-
gle work which is pure, but I am baptized, and through
my baptism God, Who cannot lie, has bound Himself in
a covenant with me, not to count my sin against me, but
to slay it and blot it out.’”

**Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.**

*Oh, Lord Christ, Fount of everlasting compassion;
grant Your church on earth grace according to Your
promise, that she may be the channel of Your mercy to
all those in need, body and soul. And may Your merci-
ful washing ever more beget in us merciful living.*



*Wednesday Bible study Friendship Classes are special
events for the 60 to 80 people attending Lutheran
Disability Outreach, Fort Wayne. This program provides
a one-on-one Christian relationship with a student who
has a developmental disability.*



*Rev. Matthew C. Harrison
is executive director of
LCMS World Relief and
Human Care.*



LUTHERANS (STILL) CARE

Lutherans in America have been doing human-care ministry for more than 150 years, providing care from adoption to aging services and everything in between.

by Kim Plummer Krull

Nearly 130 years ago, a dozen Lutheran congregations in northern Illinois joined forces to provide a home for children who had lost their parents and had nowhere to turn.

Using a farmhouse in Addison, these Lutherans opened the German Evangelical Lutheran Orphan Home for six youngsters.

Today, that orphanage has grown into Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois (LCFS), an extensive social-ministry organization that touches 20,000 children and families a year through services that include adoption, foster care, counseling, residential programs and community services.

That's just one example of the stories Jill Schumann wants the world to hear—stories about how Lutherans in congregations and communities across the country have identified needs and responded.

"Lutherans have a rich history of service, but it's not well known," said Schumann, president of Lutheran Services in America (LSA), the young alliance of 281 Lutheran social-ministry organizations like LCFS.

"Generally, Lutherans are more focused on serving than telling about their service," she said. "They tend to go quietly about their work."

So quietly that the typical "Lutheran in the pew," Schumann says, would never guess that Lutheran health-and-human-ser-

Rev. Norm Dake of Lutheran Ministries Association, St. Louis, teaches Bible-study classes and does one-on-one counseling with inmates in his chaplain ministry at the St. Louis County Jail.

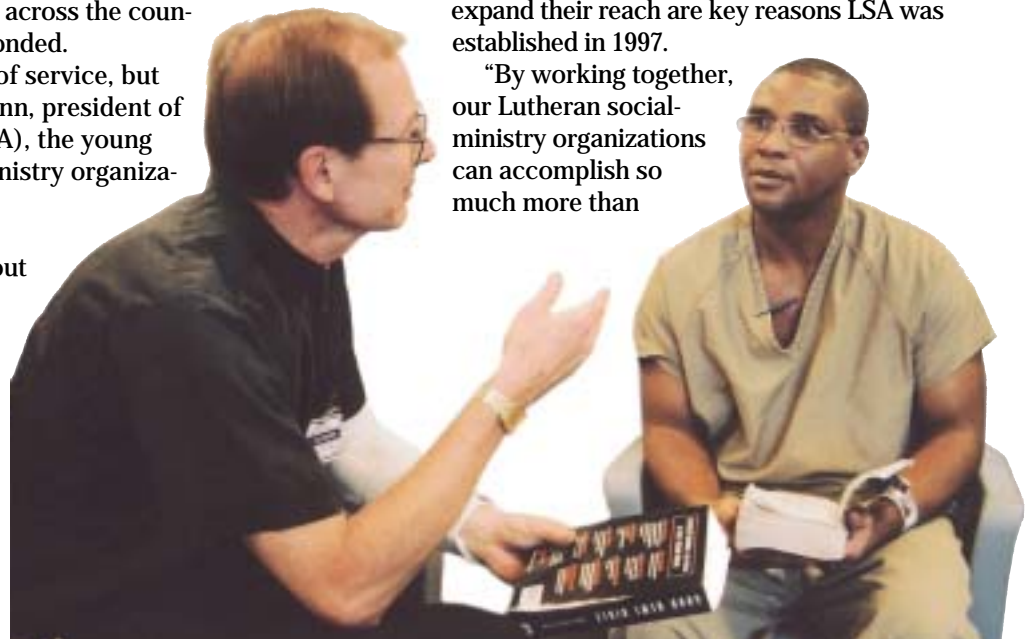
vice organizations serve 5.8 million people—one in 50 people in the United States and the Caribbean.

So quietly that even the boards and staffs of these organizations are surprised to learn they are part of what *The NonProfit Times*, a business magazine for non-profit management, has called the largest not-for-profit network in the United States, a network with collective operating budgets of nearly \$7.6 billion—far greater than those of the Red Cross, the Salvation Army or the YMCA.

American Lutherans have been doing social—also called human-care—ministry since the mid-1800s, beginning with such early efforts as Lutheran hospitals and orphanages. Today's services generally continue to spring out of the local congregation and have expanded to include childcare, counseling, disaster assistance, residential care, prison ministries and many more.

Highlighting those ministries to strengthen services and expand their reach are key reasons LSA was established in 1997.

"By working together, our Lutheran social-ministry organizations can accomplish so much more than



MORE THAN 5 MILLION SERVED

Lutheran Services in America (LSA) is working to raise the public's awareness of Lutheran social ministry to match some of its remarkably high numbers.

In one year alone (fiscal 2000–2001), Lutheran agencies served more than 5.8 million people in 3,000 communities, according to an LSA survey. That service included:

- + More than 125,000 people were served in foster-care programs.
- + More than 13,000 people received adoption services.

- + More than 24,000 people received employment services.
- + More than 12,500 permanent-housing units were made available.
- + More than 100,000 people participated in counseling services.
- + More than 109,000 people lived in residential facilities providing 24-hour care.
- + More than 5 million meals were served.
- + More than 78,000 nights of shelter were provided.

- + More than 8,500 people were served in partnership with Lutheran Disaster Response in the wake of 29 fires, seven tornadoes, 24 floods and one earthquake.

The people who provided that service included:

- + More than 93,000 volunteers.
- + 3,800 board members (all volunteers).
- + More than 144,000 paid staff.

— K.P.K.

they can on their own," Schumann said.

One major step in that direction has been the facilitation of 15 networks—groups of Lutheran social-ministry organizations that provide professional support and leadership development, and opportunities to more effectively integrate services.

A relatively new one is the Lutheran Adoption Network (LAN), a group of 32 Lutheran adoption services that pool their resources to help families provide homes for abandoned and orphaned children.

A family baffled by where to begin the complex process of international adoption can click the group's Web site (www.LANadopt.org) and get assistance from what may be the world's largest adoption service network.

"What's exciting about this network is that it brings together agencies that have relationships with foreign countries and that have access to children who need families to work with other like-minded agencies," said

Carol Hakala, director of adoption services for Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, a LAN member.

The LSA Disability Network (LSA-DN) provides a forum for the leaders of 14 organizations that serve 12,000 people with developmental disabilities. Members share resources, develop materials together and exchange information on regulations and staff recruitment and retention.

The LSA Chaplains' Network has nearly 100 members, including many who work in Lutheran hospitals and residential-care facilities.

"LSA gives us a way to connect with colleagues who have the information we may need tomorrow," said Craig Carlson, the network chair and chaplain at Lakeshore Lutheran Home, Duluth, Minn.

LSA also is sharing the Lutheran social ministry story in Washington, D.C. It's a two-way process, Schumann

PARTNERS WITH CONGREGATIONS

No doubt about it, Our Savior Lutheran Church in Lansing, Mich., is a caring congregation. But the pastor is the first to admit that its members aren't experts in identifying and meeting human needs.

That's why they partner with Lutheran Child and Family Service (LCFS) of Michigan, an LCMS social-ministry organization that touches nearly 16,000 people a year through services that include foster care, adoption and counseling.

"By working hand in hand with an

agency like LCFS, we know we can volunteer or give gifts and our support will get to the people who need it when they need it," said Rev. Robert Appold, Our Savior's pastor.

One example of this longtime partnership is a parish-based counseling service. Our Savior provides office space for a professional counselor who serves both church and community members on issues that may reach beyond the pastor's training.

— K.P.K.



Rev. Robert Appold helps set up Our Savior's "caring tree." Each Advent, it is decorated with the names and wishes of needy children. Members respond with gifts that show Christ's love.

THREE MORE HUMAN-CARE PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to Lutheran Services in America (LSA), three other human-care partnerships are cooperative ministries of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) www.ldr.org

Last year, LDR responded to the urgent needs of people affected by tornadoes in Mississippi, Kansas and Wisconsin, as well as tropical storms and flooding in Texas and Louisiana.

Since Sept. 11, the ministry also has channeled financial support through LDR's "Comfort and Renew" to help victims of the terrorist attacks and their families.

LDR works in partnership with local Lutheran social-ministry organi-

zations and congregations to provide emergency relief and long-term recovery. Volunteers who can help clean up and rebuild are needed. So are financial donations, which LCMS members channel through LCMS World Relief and Human Care.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)

www.lirs.org

These are challenging times for LIRS, the agency charged by the church to welcome the "stranger"—refugees and immigrants who come to this country seeking new hope and new life.

Since Sept. 11, refugee resettlement has slowed dramatically. Only 28,000 of the 70,000 refugees originally authorized to enter the United States this year have been resettled, said Annie Wilson, acting LIRS president.

"Understandably, there is more fear of people born in other countries," Wilson said. But, she added, refugees are not terrorists. Instead, many are victims of terrorism.

Congregations are invited to spon-

sor families and reach out to immigrants who live in their communities.

Financial donations are needed more than ever.

Lutheran World Relief (LWR)

www.lwr.org

LWR is an opportunity to "love your neighbor" in places most Americans will never see, said Jonathan Frerichs, the ministry's communications director.

"As Americans, we might think we don't have to worry about these problems overseas, but as Christians, we don't have a choice," Frerichs said.

LWR is involved in about 150 projects with 100 different partners in 50 countries. The ministry is a leader in working to turn the tide on hunger and AIDS through the "Stand with Africa" campaign.

Congregations are needed to tackle hands-on projects such as making quilts and donating used clothing. LCMS members can direct financial gifts through LCMS World Relief.

—K.P.K.

says, that includes educating LSA agencies about actions on Capitol Hill that may impact their services as well as building relationships in offices as prominent as the White House.

The timing is good. President Bush has expressed great support for faith-based organizations and the need for their services, establishing an Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Schumann and other key LSA members have been invited to White House meetings.

"The folks on the Hill know Lutherans are out there and doing good work. They respect our numbers," Schumann said. "Through LSA, they also know how to grab hold of Lutherans and find out what they think."

Looking ahead, one LSA project expected to debut within the next few months is a Web searchable database of Lutheran social-ministry organizations. A person in New York, for example, will be able to use the LSA Web site (www.lutheranservices.org) to find the closest Lutheran nursing home for a loved one in Florida.

Although LSA has made tremendous strides over the past five years, hurdles remain. One struggle, Schumann says, is to find ways the alliance can more effectively help social-ministry organizations grow their ministry. Another is to help agencies better

express their Lutheran identity.

Other challenges crop up due to the alliance's diverse membership—agencies that serve a wide mix of people and that can be recognized by either The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or be affiliated with both.

"Clearly, there are issues within and between the LCMS and ELCA that create tension in some spheres," Schumann said. But, she added, she believes there is "real value in the two church bodies working together in social ministry."

"Sometimes, people think of mainline churches like the Lutheran churches as static and not where exciting things are happening," she continued. "But the truth is, Lutherans have a lot of creative, effective work going on, in their congregations and in their social-ministry organizations."

"It's a lively witness," Schumann said. "We need and love to tell the story."



Kim Plummer Krull is a free-lance writer and a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Des Peres, Mo.

TO THINK IS TO THANK

by Andrew Simcak Jr.

*“Once you have experienced the grace of God, the rest of life is thanksgiving.”
Martin Luther*

The words “think” and “thank” (and the German “*denken*” and “*danken*”) come from the same Latin root word *tongere*, to know.

We need to think in order to thank. Often, the reason we do not give thanks to God as we should is that we do not think of all He has, is and will do for us.

Thankfulness has been rightly called “the memory of the heart and head.”

Why do we give thanks?

Read Col. 3:17, Phil. 4:4–7 and 1 Chron. 16:8 in your Bible and then answer that question in your own words.

What is the greatest blessing for which we give Him thanks?

Before answering that question, read 2 Cor. 9:15 and Ps. 103:9–13.

How did God “remove our sins from us” with His “incredible gift”?

Is thankfulness limited to special days and events?

Read Eph. 5:20 and 6:18, and reread Phil. 4:6.

Read 1 Thess. 5:16–18. Does this describe your prayer life? When does it *not*?

Why do you think it is so easy to take God’s blessings for granted?

Read Luke’s account about our Savior’s healing of the 10 lepers (17:11–18) for some insights.

What an example of thankfulness the Samaritan leper is for us to follow. A daily attitude of gratitude for all of God’s undeserved blessings of body and soul is a God-given privilege. Read Psalm 92.

Conclusion

Ps. 118:1 — the common table prayer — summarizes why the child of God gives thanks. As we *think* more about what God has done for us, we will *thank* Him. Our hearts and minds will overflow with thanksgiving that will demonstrate itself in lips and lives filled with “thanksgiving.”



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

Kieschnick calls for 'rededication to church's mission'

"If The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is going to continue to be a vital part of the Body of Christ, it is necessary that we rededicate ourselves to the mission of the church," Synod President Gerald Kieschnick told the Council of Presidents (COP) at their September meeting in St. Louis.

He stressed that the church's mission is "critical."

Kieschnick acknowledged that the Synod is "fractured by disagreements," but said, "there are also many reasons for great hope for the future."

He emphasized the need for the Synod "mainstream" to "continue to be solidly Biblical,

Confessional, evangelical and missional, yielding not to those who are perceived as holding positions on either the far right or far left with regard to theological issues in our midst, but focused on staying on the

road together."

Kieschnick said, "We are called to be a Synod with one mission, the Great Commission ... proclaiming one message, the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified ... to live and act as one

people," he said.

After hearing Kieschnick's report, the COP voted to "encourage him to share it with the Synod." The full report is on the Web at www.lcms.org/president.

All 10 CUS schools make 'best' list

For the second year in a row, all 10 of the Synod's Concordia University System (CUS) schools are in the top ranks of *U.S. News and World Report's* listings of "America's Best Colleges."

U.S. News announced its 2003 best-college academic rankings in September, published a special edition listing



them, and also posted them on its Web site, www.usnews.com.

The CUS schools are ranked in four tiers, with Concordia University, Seward, Neb., listed in tier

one, the highest ranking.

"Our heritage of Lutheran higher education continues to be a source of great pride for the Synod," said Dr. William F. Meyer, executive director of the LCMS Board for Higher Education, after the 2003 rankings were announced.

Schulz no longer Lutheran Hour radio speaker

Missouri Synod Second Vice President Wallace Schulz is no longer Lutheran Hour radio speaker for the International Lutheran Laymen's League (Int'l LLL).

The league considers Schulz to have "vacated" his employment with the organization, said league spokesman Jim Telle.



Schulz

Telle said Schulz failed to agree to stipulations set by Executive Director

Rodger Hebermehl for his continued service with the league. He said Schulz's employment with the Int'l LLL ended Sept. 17.

The end of his employment with the league does not affect Schulz's status as a Synod vice president.

Schulz was temporarily relieved of his Lutheran Hour duties July 12 after he placed Atlantic District President David Benke on suspended status. Schulz's action came in response to complaints over Benke's participation in a post-Sept. 11 event at Yankee Stadium last year.

The league's Board of Governors July 21 said

that Schulz had violated the organization's code of ethics and its conflict of interest policy by adjudicating the Benke case.

Schulz said he wrote two letters to the board, "the last one appealing that we return to the working relationship of trust that we enjoyed for the past 25 years. The LLL board decided otherwise.

"I accept and respect the board's decision," Schulz continued. "I have absolutely no negative feelings about people at the LLL or the Board of Governors. I am ready and eager to move on to wherever I can serve our gra-

rious Lord in His kingdom, always mindful that we must press on with the work of our Lord 'as long as it is day since the night is coming when no man can work.'"

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.

Task force to study member losses, renewed outreach

A new task force appointed by Synod President Gerald Kieschnick is looking at why the LCMS lost 28,000 members in 2000 and 13,000 in 2001, and what can be done to bring more people to Christ.

The focus of the eight-member task force, which first met last month, is dubbed, "Mission Forward 21st Century: A Matter of Faithfulness."

Its purpose, Kieschnick said, "is to identify the reasons for these losses, to report ... their recommendations for stopping these unacceptable losses, and to help the Synod begin to experience gains in all our congregations of the number of souls for whom Christ died."

"We're going to listen to the church [and] ask for God's guidance," said Dr. Robert J. Scudieri, director of North America Services with LCMS World Mission.

"It's now time,"

Scudieri said, for the Missouri Synod to "stop making excuses, stop trying to rationalize why we're not growing and to say, 'Lord, we're not what You wanted us to be. Forgive us. And bless our efforts at outreach.'"

Missionaries safe in Cote d'Ivoire

Seven LCMS "missionary units"—individuals and families who serve as missionaries—in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), West Africa, are unharmed in fighting from

a military uprising that started there Sept. 19.

Although fighting continued as this *Lutheran Witness* went to press, the LCMS missionaries are not believed to be in danger, according to Ken Reiner, counselor for missionary care with LCMS World Mission.

"At this point, we're monitoring the situation very carefully," said Reiner, adding that the missionaries would be evacuated if that became necessary.

LCMS woman in Canada faces deportation, prison

As this *Lutheran Witness* went to press, a woman who is a communicant member of a Missouri Synod congregation in Canada was in danger of being deported and jailed in Iran because a Canadian immigration-authority judge did not believe she is a Christian.

"Nancy" (not her real name, to protect her identity), a refugee from Iran and a member of Ascension Lutheran Church, Montreal, was expected to be forced out of Canada as early as the end of last month.

Her pastor, Rev. Harold Ristau, says Nancy almost certainly faces imprisonment—and perhaps death—if she is forced to return to Iran, where she, her husband, son and daughter are labeled as apostate because they are consid-

ered to have converted from Islam to Christianity.

Nancy's request for refugee status in Canada was denied earlier this year by Judge Helene Panagakos, who, during an immigration hearing in which she attempted to determine whether Nancy was a Christian, did not offer Nancy an opportunity for a fact-finding

appeal.

Ristau says that the court's decision that Nancy is not a Christian seems to hinge on several points, including the judge's lack of familiarity with Lutheranism and rejection of Ristau's "expert" testimony on Nancy's behalf.

Nancy emigrated to Canada almost two years

ago, claiming her life was in danger because she was a Christian convert in Iran. Her pastor said it is legal in Iran to be a Christian but illegal to convert to Christianity.

Nancy has appealed the judge's decision. But Ristau said the appeal process is lengthy and would almost surely be concluded long after Nancy is deported.

Letters were sent to the court on Nancy's behalf by a number of Lutheran officials, including LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick.

Nancy said that she is convinced that she will go to jail in Iran if she is deported.

"I know whatever happens, God's going to take care of me," she said. "Jesus is my Savior."



Rev. Harold Ristau, pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church, Montreal, prays with "Nancy," who faces the possibility of being deported from Canada and imprisoned in Iran. Her face is obscured to protect her identity.

THANKS FOR LIVES TRANSFORMED

For the last two months, I've shared some significant concerns in this column, including these statements:

- A deep spiritual crisis exists today throughout the United States and across the face of the globe.
- A deep spiritual crisis exists today throughout the Christian church, including The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In those columns, I articulated my concerns for the health, vitality and future of the Christian faith, the Christian church and the Missouri Synod, from my perspective as Synod president.

I hasten to add a word of encouragement, hope, optimism and excitement about the future I see for the church, especially the LCMS, in the years ahead. It is particularly appropriate to share these positive aspects of our life together this month, inviting you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, to give God humble and hearty thanks for His rich blessings to our Synod as together we celebrate our national day of Thanksgiving.

Although we have our share of challenges in the LCMS, there are also great causes for rejoicing and reasons for celebration:

- Many congregations of our part of the Body of Christ are beehives of mission and ministry, taking advantage of the virtually unlimited opportunities for outreach that exist in these early years of the 21st century!
- Many congregations are experiencing healthy growth and dynamic worship, using creative formats and traditional liturgies in leading members and visitors to experience a worshipful encounter with the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

- Many congregations are seizing opportunities in their local communities for touching the lives of people who are lost, hurting, oppressed and searching for value, meaning, hope and acceptance!

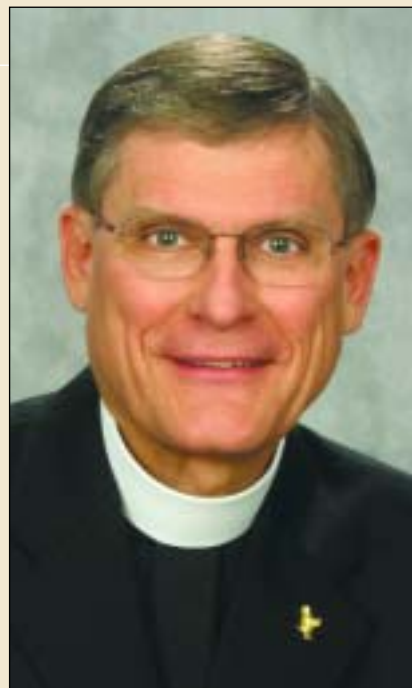
- Many congregations are boldly and creatively involving their pastoral and lay leaders in the revitalization of hearts and lives through Word and Sacrament, sparking sanctified, intentional and strategic mission endeavors in the churches and schools of our Synod!

In a recent meeting of the Council of Presidents, I presented a report titled "The State of the Synod." The Council received this report "with gratitude" and encouraged me to share it with the entire Synod. Subsequently, it was e-mailed to the congregations and professional church workers for whom we have e-mail addresses. This report also is available on the Synod's Web site, www.lcms.org. I respectfully invite and encourage you to read and share it with others in your congregation.

Here are a few quotes from that report:

- "We are called to be a Synod with **One Mission** ... the Great Commission mandated by our Lord in Matt. 28:18-20. Accomplishing the mission of the church to disciple, baptize and teach the nations of the world is and must continue to be Job One among us!"

- "We are called to be a Synod proclaiming **One Message** ... the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified ... the message of sins forgiven ... the message of the free gift of eternal life. For, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting mankind's sins against them' (2 Cor. 5:19). We have the greatest message in the world!"



- "We are called to live and act as **One People**. I implore you, in the words of St. Paul to the Philippians, 'Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ ... stand firm in *one* spirit, contending as *one* man for the faith of the gospel' (Phil. 1:27). We need to work together—as *one*—to meet the challenges before us!"

- "It is my presidential perception that, for 155 years, our Synod has been held together by the grace of God, the commitment of pastors, teachers and congregations to that grace and to its theological confession of that grace at work in the world, proclaimed through word and deed to the lost people of the world. The result of God's work among us: *transformed lives through Christ's love ... in time, for eternity!*"

May your Thanksgiving celebration include heartfelt thanks for God's great gifts to His church, including The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod!

Jerry Kieschnick

John 3:16-17

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