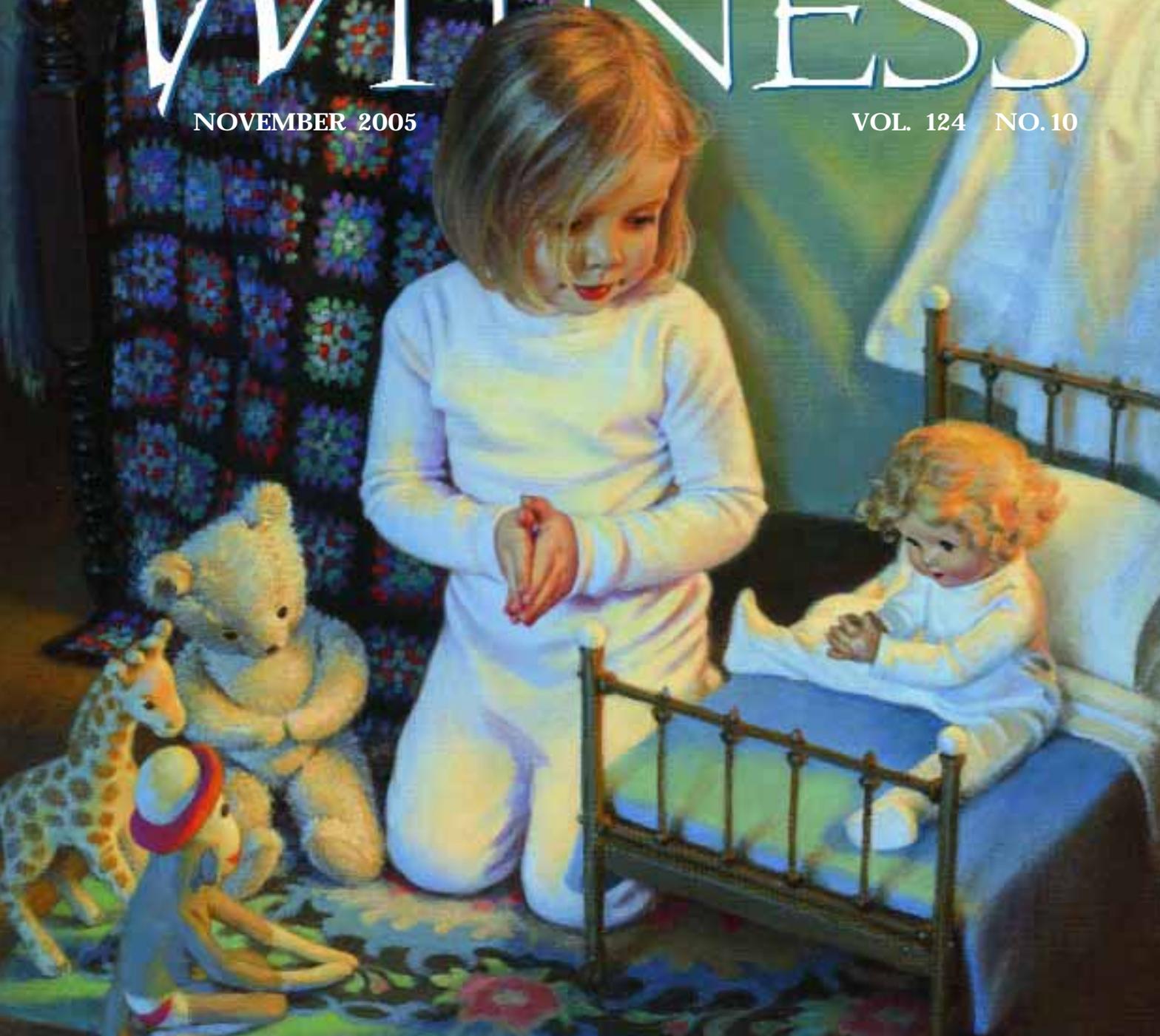


The Lutheran WITNESS

NOVEMBER 2005

VOL. 124 NO. 10



**TEACH YOUR CHILDREN
TO BE THANKFUL**



*Also:
A Touch of Mercy
Ablaze! Around
the World*

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The LUTHERAN WITNESS

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

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Photo courtesy of LCMS World Relief/Human Care

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DR. CAROL JABS WROTE A SENSITIVE AND helpful article on blended families (Sept. '05). Much, much more could and should be said.

Mine is a blended family, and a blessed one. Together we have learned lessons of communication, caring, and cooperating that none of us had understood or practiced in our previous family experiences. We have learned how to live respectful and disciplined lives without threats and punishments. We talk and listen to each other with our hearts as well as our heads.

All of what we have learned flows from a belief that the Word made flesh wants us to use our words with each other to tell the truth in love, to love and accept each other's thoughts and feelings without conditions, to forgive others from our hearts, and to live to serve our neighbors. This is how we live out our faith in Jesus.

I wish that all families could experience what we have experienced in our blended family. I pray that we may experience it ever more richly in our own.

*Rev. James Metcalf
Jenison/Allendale, Mich.*

THE ARTICLE ON BLENDED FAMILIES WAS outstanding and insightful. However, I do not agree with the point that stepparents and stepchildren, when finding it difficult to love one another, have only an "obligation" to respect one another.

Just as God blessed us with two wonderful biological children, He also has blessed me with a wonderful stepdaughter. To view my relationship with her as an "obligation"

Blended families

I wish that all families could experience what we have experienced in our blended and blessed family.

*Rev. James Metcalf
Jenison/Allendale, Mich.*

is to diminish her value in God's sight. I am obligated to walk the dog and pay my bills, but to love a child is not an obligation but rather a gift from the Lord—regardless of how the relationship begins or develops. Stepchildren need love almost more than the biological children in a family because their original family units have been broken.

*Liz Riedemann
St. Peters, Mo.*

Anguish on campus

WHAT A BLESSING IT WOULD BE IF EVERY parent and student could read Kim Krull's article, "Anguish and Assurance on Campus" (August '05).

The pressures young adults endure, whether entering college or not, are tremendous. Depression and stress can cause physical changes that often lead to poor choices or rash decisions.

I was particularly encouraged by the concern of LCMS campus ministries to help students come together with Christ as their common bond and strength in overcoming the obstacles that seem overwhelming at times. It is crucial that youth-oriented church groups help steer our youth in the right direction so they are better prepared to deal with this ever-changing world.

*Sharon Dykes
Ward, Ark.*

Carry on, faithful women

THANKS TO PAULA SCHLUETER ROSS and kudos to the members of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League ("In League with the Lord,"

Sept. '05).

I can't say enough good things about the LWML. Their single-minded devotion to the work of Christ is an inspiration and example for us all. I have been in congregations where the (male) administration was so bogged down in controversy and triviality that, but for the LWML contingent on hand, little would have been accomplished for Christ.

Let me remind the women of the LWML not to worry about being characterized as "little old ladies." St. Paul teaches that there is no difference— young or old, male or female, slave or free—we are all one in Christ. So carry on boldly!

*Leon O. Billig
Burnet, Texas*

A word from Mormon country

LET ME COMMEND THE AUTHOR WHO answered the "Q&A" question, "Are Mormons Saved?" (June/July '05). I greatly appreciated his tender response to a very difficult question. As a veteran pastor who has ministered in Utah for more than 12 years, I would like to make a few observations concerning the answer given.

I have been brought to my knees on more than one occasion upon seeing the Holy Spirit work His amazing faith in the hearts of people who have come out of the Mormon religion and become Christians. In May alone, I was privileged to baptize five adults and two children who were former members in the Latter Day Saints (LDS) church. We have an amazing God who does marvelous works.

No person who attends ward meetings, which are far from worship services, on Sundays will hear the true, unadulterated Word of God. The author of the article is correct when he says the King James Version of the Bible is used and believed "insofar as it is interpreted correctly." Please know that the Bible is highly polluted

in the LDS church, not only with the *Book of Mormon* but also with the two other LDS scriptures, *Doctrine and Covenant* and *Pearl of Great Price*. It simply is not possible to know the true Jesus from within the walls of ward houses, stake houses, or any other meeting place of the LDS church.

Mormons believe they have a living prophet/seer who has complete control over both doctrine and practice in the LDS church. It is not possible to know the true God when teachings change when it pleases mankind.

It would be good for *The Lutheran Witness* to do stories on Rev. Matthew Nelson, missionary-at-large in southern Utah, and Susan Robert, a director of Christian outreach intern and former member of the LDS church. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these two faithful workers are doing amazing ministry in Mormon country.

*Rev. Gary G. Trickey
St. Paul Lutheran Church
Ogden, Utah*

An open thank-you

AS WE PREPARE TO LEAVE FORT WAYNE, Ind., headed home to Tennessee for our delayed vicarage, we cannot leave without saying thank you — thank you to the entire Synod.

Through the publication of this note, we hope to reach as many of you as possible who have made donations of time, talent, and treasures to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. God has provided for us these last three years through folks like you. The food and clothing co-ops were lifelines. We were constantly amazed and overwhelmed by the generosity of fellow Missouri Synod Lutherans from all over the United States.

God's blessings to each of you as you continue to find ways to assist those men and women whom God has called into His ministry.

*Floyd and Sherrill Smithey
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Ind*

REACHING OUT WITH CHAINSAWS— AND A TOUCH OF MERCY

In difficult times and in difficult places, the body and soul ministry of LCMS World Relief and Human Care can look very unlike the ministries we are accustomed to. But it is deeply rooted in what Christ asks of His followers.

Rev. Carlos Hernandez, director of Districts and Congregations with LCMS World Relief and Human Care, surveys the physical and personal damage that Hurricane Katrina has left behind along the Gulf Coast.

by Kim Krull

Days after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast with one of the deadliest, most costly storms in U.S. history, Rev. Matthew Harrison trudged through the muck and mud in battered Louisiana and Mississippi.

The executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care arrived bearing chainsaws, tools few would link with ministry—unless, of course, you have just survived a Category 4 storm and your home and neighborhood are littered with fallen trees.

“This is what we as Lutherans are called to do: care for others, body and soul,” Harrison said. “And in times of disaster, when people are hurting and suffering, it is especially critical for us to reach out to physical needs with the love of Christ. We cannot sit passively.”

During a year marked by two unprecedented natural disasters, “passive” hardly describes the unprecedented, hands-on response by the Synod’s official arm of mercy, an alliance of disaster relief, self-help, and human care ministries.

In January, following the horrific earthquake and tsunami in South Asia, Harrison traveled to Sri Lanka to offer support to local Lutheran leaders, begin needs assessments and, with partner organizations, launch relief efforts that will continue for years to come.

“Our tsunami-affected partner churches are very small,” Harrison said. “They have great challenges and needs, but we’re making progress.”

More recently this summer, he and LCMS World Relief/Human Care’s Rev. Carlos Hernandez, direc-

tor of Districts and Congregations, surveyed eerily similar devastation in the battered southern United States. Again, the ministry joined



Chain saws became an important part of the outreach of Trinity Lutheran Church in Baton Rouge, La., after the hurricane.

LCMS partners in massive cleanup and recovery efforts that are only just beginning.

The dramatic needs generated by those two catastrophes intensify Harrison's passion for this ministry's deep theological roots as well as the relatively new challenge to build what he calls "a long-overdue, urgently needed LCMS national capacity to respond to disasters, both domestically and internationally."

"When the LCMS works with other Lutherans and Christians, we are most effective when we bring capacity," Harrison said.

As a young pastor fresh out of seminary, Harrison says he believed the church had two primary roles: preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. Serving in the parish opened his eyes to the church's corporate life of mercy.

While at Zion Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., Harrison says that an inner-city congregation and a liquor store stood as the sole survivors in a troubled neighborhood of dilapidated buildings, crime, and poverty.

"As a church, we knew that we not only had the opportunity but the responsibility to act corporately and reach out to the people of our com-



Rev. Matthew Harrison receives a crucifix from a Sri Lankan fisherman. The crucifix had been in his house when his entire village was devastated by the tsunami last December. Harrison was in Sri Lanka to help coordinate relief efforts and concern for those in need.

munity as a good neighbor," said Harrison, who helped lead a successful neighborhood revitalization effort. "Today, it's astounding to see what has been accomplished." (To learn more about the church's role in housing, request a free copy of "Theological and Personal Reflections on Confessional Lutheran Involvement in Neighborhood Renewal," written by Harrison. Call LCMS World Relief/Human Care at 1-800-248-1930, Ext. 1380.)

The foundation for the church to reach out with a touch of mercy "is

as old as the church itself," Harrison said.

"St. Paul spent over a decade consumed by the need to get relief to the suffering in Jerusalem," he said. "Word and Sacrament ministry is central to the church being the church, but we see from the New Testament, from Luther, and from our Lutheran fathers that the church also has a corporate life of mercy."

To promote a clearer understanding of the church as a mercy place, LCMS World Relief/Human Care publishes a booklet series of theolog-

ical insights. One "must-read," Harrison says, is Martin Luther's treatise on "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ and the Brotherhoods" of 1519. (For a free copy that includes a preface by Harrison, call LCMS World Relief/Human Care at the number listed above and request "Fight, Work, Pray!")

Fast-forwarding from 1519 to 2005, Rev. Kurtis Schultz, president of the Synod's Southern District, cites those aforementioned chainsaws as one modern-day example of the church reaching out to people in need.



Maggie Karner, left, director of LCMS Life Ministries, talks with young Russian women about a life ministries/human care project in Russia where abortions are rampant. Life Ministries is a program of World Relief and Human Care.

WHY LCMS WORLD RELIEF/ HUMAN CARE NEEDS YOU!

An overwhelming outpouring of generosity has generated, at press time, a record \$10 million in hurricane relief through LCMS World Relief and Human Care.

That follows the previous record of \$5.6 million contributed to the ministry this year for tsunami relief.

"This phenomenal support is a tremendous blessing for which we sincerely thank our many faithful donors," said Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director, LCMS World Relief and Human Care. "You have enabled us to reach out with a scale of relief that is unprecedented."

But along with tremendous blessings, those "disaster dollars" also bring challenges.

"Big disasters like the tsunami and, more recently, the hurricanes tend to pull funding away from projects established to meet current and ongoing needs," Harrison said.

Compounding this funding "tilt," he said, is the fact that none of the unrestricted (i.e., undesignated) funding the Synod receives is budgeted for LCMS World Relief. "We depend 100 percent on our donors," Harrison said. "That we get no financial support from the Synod surprises many fellow LCMS members who assume that at least some portion of the money they drop in their congregation's Sunday-morning collection plate or give to their district office goes to this ministry."

To support the many ongoing programs of LCMS World Relief/Human Care, including those accomplishments highlighted in the accompanying story, Harrison asks donors to consider these suggestions:

- Encourage your congregation to include LCMS World Relief/Human Care in its annual budget.
- When you contribute to LCMS World Relief/Human Care, consider making an unrestricted gift that can be used "where needed most."
- Recognize the difference between LCMS World Relief/Human Care and Lutheran World Relief (LWR). Many people confuse the two ministries. LWR is a pan-Lutheran organization headquartered in Baltimore, Md. LCMS World Relief/Human Care, based in St. Louis, Mo., is the Synod's official mercy ministry.

"LCMS World Relief/Human Care gratefully and humbly receives your gifts, whether they are designated for a disaster response, a particular program, or where needed most," Harrison said. "Please know that it's *you* who enables our ministry to reach out with a touch of mercy."

To learn more about the work of LCMS World Relief/Human Care and giving opportunities, call (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1380, or visit <http://worldrelief.lcms.org>.

— K.P.K.

"The Gospel message can sound hollow to people whose physical needs are so enormous that they cannot hear what the church is saying over the growls of their stomachs or the cries of their pain," said the president of a district that includes Louisiana and Mississippi, areas where Hurricane Katrina impacted 60 LCMS congregations, including nine that were completely destroyed.

As many as one million people in that area remain homeless today. "LCMS World Relief has been a great partner in our recovery efforts," Schultz said. The ministry, he added, has "absolutely raised awareness of how



Carol Broemmer, manager of LCMS World Relief and Human Care Health Ministries, gives toothbrushes and toothpaste to children at an orphanage in Kenya, Africa, earlier this year.

the church must touch people in concrete ways that enable us to share what we believe."

But while the tsunami and hurricanes dominated headlines, Harrison stresses that LCMS World Relief/Human Care means much more than disaster response.

Helping African partners fight HIV/AIDS and hunger in Africa, for example, remains a major focus.

In Madagascar, the ministry provides seminars and resources to help local Lutheran leaders combat the AIDS crisis theologically and pastorally. In war-torn Sudan, human-care projects produce building materials for homes, schools, and worship facilities and help farmers acquire land, seeds, and tools.

In Kenya, an especially popular LCMS World Relief/Human Care program provides cows—and sometimes camels—to pastors and church workers as a means to help support their families and sustain their ministries.

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“This simple cow-project has turned around that church (LCMS partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya),” said Rev. Bernhard Seter, a North Dakota pastor and member of the Board for Human Care Ministries.

Seter saw the impact of “Cows for Kenya” when he was in that country on fact-finding mission trips both before and after the program’s launch. “This is a church that felt beaten down, but now its leaders are excited and lifted up in their vision,” Seter said. “We’ve given them capacity, and it’s exciting!”



Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, talks to pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya who were recipients of cows in the “Cows for Kenya” project.

A sampling of other accomplishments this year by LCMS World Relief/Human Care includes providing:

- A record \$2.8 million in grants for international mission projects to LCMS World Mission.
- \$1.25 million to Lutheran World Relief, Baltimore, Md.
- Hundreds of thousands of dollars in domestic grants to Lutheran social-ministry organizations and congregations for mercy outreach.

- One-quarter million dollars to promote the service of women as deaconesses.
 - Supportive services for 450 LCMS chaplains in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, and other non-church settings.
 - Resources and support for parish nurses who serve their congregations and communities as health educators and spiritual caregivers.
 - The Synod’s pro-life work through LCMS Life Ministries, which is making great strides in the United States and leading pioneering outreach in Russia.
 - The National Lutheran Housing Support Corporation, a nonprofit, charitable resource that is opening doors to previously unavailable grants and technical assistance for congregations involved in community revitalization.
- Looking ahead, Harrison says LCMS World Relief/Human Care will continue to focus on strengthening LCMS partner churches around the world and, closer to home, supporting LCMS districts and congregations, pastors and people, so that they, in turn, are better equipped to reach out to their broader communities.

The ministry also tends to the vast majority of “cooperation in externals,” human-care efforts primarily with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). LCMS World Relief/Human Care provides support to Lutheran Services in America, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, Lutheran Disaster Response, and Lutheran World Relief, Baltimore. “In these efforts, we do our very best to model confessionally Lutheran integrity while working with churches not in fellowship with the LCMS,” Harrison said.

But challenges exist, he added, stemming from the ELCA and the recent controversy involving sexual-

ity. “Those issues do no make our cooperative work any easier,” he said. “But these agencies work very hard to respect LCMS theological and ethical convictions. Through these long-standing relationships, the LCMS does in fact cooperate very broadly with other Christians. LWR, for example, does tremendous work in relief and development internationally.”

LCMS World Relief/Human Care also will continue to partner with ministries that share its commitment to care for the needy while proclaiming the Gospel. Orphan Grain Train, the Lutheran Laymen’s League, and the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League are only a few recent recipients of matching grants.

The ministry also expects to work with an even broader range of organizations as it leads the challenge to develop a national LCMS disaster strategy.

“Our church has tremendous skills and resources, plus a marvelous volunteer spirit,” Harrison said. “We must better prepare ourselves to work together as efficiently and effectively as possible the next time disaster strikes.”

“We have such a fantastic treasure in the beautiful Lutheran Confession of the faith, with its clear message to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, in the name of Christ and His Gospel,” Harrison continued.

“It’s a privilege to see so many wonderful acts of mercy that take place every day in the church,” he said. “We face challenges, to be sure, but the rewards are so much greater!”



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

CHRIST ON CAMPUS

This college freshman accepted her pastor's advice. It made all the difference in her life.

by Ruanne Kuhlmann

Although I'm from Houston, Texas, my childhood church experience was completely rural. Every Sunday my family drove to the country for church. It was the way my mother stayed connected to her roots, and it gave us kids time to spend time on my grandparents' farm.

Nothing prepared me for the challenges of a freshman on a major university campus. I entered the University of Texas in Austin well-grounded in my faith. But, within a very short time, I dealt with lifestyles of roommates and dorm friends that were very different from anything I had known. I stared incredulously at a Jewish classmate when she planned to go home for the Jewish celebration of the High Holy Days and Chanukah when we left for Christmas vacation. And when my new Catholic acquaintances questioned my beliefs as a Lutheran, I didn't know how to answer their interpretation of Scripture.

At my country church, my pastor had some advice. He gave me the address of the Lutheran student center and said, "Check it out. I think you'll enjoy it, and it will be a good place to meet friends." He gave me a flyer with information about a freshman welcome activity.

I went mostly out of curiosity and loneliness. Everyone was friendly and inviting. It felt good.

I went to church on that first Sunday out of habit. Maybe I would have lost interest, but the pastor and students were intent on making me

part of their fellowship. There was no doubt it was important to them that I continue to participate. They made sure I was included in games and other activities throughout the weeks.

I found myself at the student center more and more often. In the pastor I had a sounding board for my questions and help in dealing with

Campus ministry gave me a campus family. It was the time of the greatest spiritual growth in my life.

dormitory life. In the older students I had mentors who helped me through the challenges of being on my own for the first time. The campus ministry gave me a campus family. It was the time of the greatest spiritual growth in my life. I had come to college with good head knowledge of Jesus. I learned to know Jesus with my heart through campus ministry.

Through the experience of campus ministry, I learned what true Christian fellowship is. It was a hands-on training ground for congregational life after college. Because the congregation's members were nearly all students, we took on the roles normally held by adults—officers, elders, ushers, Bible study leaders, budget-keepers. We had congregational meetings and learned how to disagree without being disagreeable. I experienced the

challenge of balancing school responsibilities with church-related activities. More important, I learned how to live my "church experience" in and with school. I learned the concept of worship with my whole life, not just on Sunday mornings. I made friends who are still part of my life because we share the same values and the same Jesus.

Today, I am still part of the mission field. I say "still" because I believe the college campus is one of the most important mission fields our church has. At this time, God is bringing many different cultures and ethnic groups to our colleges and universities. God is blessing the church with the chance, through campus ministry, not only to present Jesus as relevant to our own young people, but also to bring the Good News to Jerusalem, Samaria, and the ends of the earth ... right in our own back yards.



Ruanne Kuhlmann is executive assistant at Lutheran Inter-City Network Coalition, Houston, Texas.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

TO BE

Thankful

As you prepare for this busy holiday season, use the opportunity to continue nurturing thankfulness in your children, from babies to teens.



by Carol Albrecht

Six-year-old Emma opened the car door in front of a house festooned with multicolored balloons. She stepped carefully from the car, juggling a box wrapped in silver paper topped with a sparkly green bow. “Don’t forget to say thank you,” Mom called as Emma skipped up the walk.

“I won’t,” Emma shouted back.

When Mom returned after the party, she smiled as Emma slid into the front seat. “Did you remember to say thank you?”

Emma put her hand to her mouth. “Oh ... I guess I forgot.”

Parents sometimes wonder if children ever get the message that saying thank you is important. Why do they seem to forget every time? And why do they need to be prompted so often?

than *taught*. We’re teaching thankfulness every time we admire a rose or the beauty of a sunset. We teach thankfulness when we give an appreciative smile to a salesperson, when we thank a neighbor, or when we let our children know we’re glad they’re part of our family.

Thankfulness is a twin sister to praise. Any time we praise God in word or song, we’re teaching thankfulness. Praise is also part of a thankful life, whether it’s praise for a job well done, a pat on the head, or appreciation for someone’s special talent.

It’s difficult to pinpoint exactly how children “catch” thankfulness, but there are guidelines.

First of all, it’s important for parents to say “thank you” often and to teach their children to do the same. “Thank you” should be among the first words a child learns. Children need frequent

grumbling and complaining. Children listen, and children learn. We can’t say we’re thankful and then spend our time griping about all the things that are wrong in our life and world. Children notice when our words don’t match our attitudes. Guess which one they’ll remember and emulate?

And, of course, we want to remember not to take God’s blessings for granted. We need to resist the temptation to spoil our children or grandchildren. Overdosing on “things” doesn’t make children grateful—it makes them greedy and selfish. Children who have less often are more thankful because they’ve learned to appreciate what’s been given to them.

In the same vein, we should teach children to focus on the blessings they have, not on what they don’t have. Our sinful human nature often wants what it doesn’t have. God, with His perfect insight, gave us *two* commandments on coveting.

Here are some practical ways to instill thankfulness in children.

1. Pray before and after meals. This is a simple but important way to reinforce an attitude of thankfulness for the food we eat. I’m reminded of a time early in our marriage, when my husband and I went out to eat with friends and their 18-month-old child. As soon as the toddler was in the restaurant high chair, he banged a spoon on the tray, shouting, “*Pray, pray, pray!*” He knew that food always followed prayer, a first step in learning that prayer shows an appreciation to God for His daily blessings.

2. Family devotions in themselves give praise to God. By focusing some of them on the subject of thankfulness, we help our children develop an attitude of thanks. (*The “Searching Scripture” Bible study that fol-*

Thankfulness is a twin sister to praise. Any time we praise God in word or song, we’re teaching thankfulness.

The problem arises just because kids are kids. They have a lot to learn, and it’s difficult for them to remember all the information flooding their developing brains. Besides that, children are born self-centered little beings. Until the age of 7 or 8, “Me” is the most important person in their life.

Does that mean parents should shrug their shoulders and wait a few years before teaching children thankfulness? Not at all! In fact, we’re teaching our children attitudes—good and bad—long before they’re able to independently apply that knowledge. Thankfulness is one of those attitudes.

That brings us to the next point. Thankfulness is really more *caught*

prompting in the early years, although eventually they’ll remember on their own. (Teenagers, however, may need reminding from time to time.)

Secondly, we need to *live thankfully* and appreciate even small blessings and little pleasures. Sometimes children are actually better at this than we are. Have you ever watched a small boy playing in a rocky area? It isn’t long until his pockets are filled with pebbles that caught his eye and became captivating “treasures.” A parent who shares his delight reinforces for him that God makes all things well and deserves our thanks and praise—even for those now-special rocks.

Thirdly, we need to keep a lid on

lows this article can be a family devotion looking at why we should openly and frequently express thanks to God, not just on Thanksgiving. — Ed.)

3. Bedtime prayers build strong habits and memories for you and your children to say thank you for the blessings of the day and focus your children on their loving heavenly Father as they fall asleep.
4. Children also need to be taught that gifts and kind acts deserve to be recognized. Seeing you write thank-you notes is a beginning of that process. When a child is quite small, allow her to enclose a picture with your note as a way of saying thank you. As your children grow older, get them in the habit of writing thank-you notes to those who remember them. Guide them in buying their own note cards and pens to make the task more pleasant and personal for them.
5. Volunteer with your older children to help at a food pantry or a homeless shelter. Serving the less fortunate is a memorable way to teach children thankfulness for their blessings.
6. Put a large, empty sheet of paper on the wall or refrigerator. Have family members add words or pictures throughout the week of things for which they're thankful. Use the page during devotions or prayer time at the end of the week.
7. Create a "Thanksgiving spot"—a small table, a box, or shelf. Let family members add pictures and objects that show things for which they're thankful. Set a time to gather routinely and share thoughts on what's been collected.
8. Write a thankfulness poem as a family, or acronym the word thanks, writing one thing you're thankful for with each letter.
9. Play the Alphabet Game, stating something you're thankful for that begins with "A." Family members take turns repeating the list and adding an item with the next letter until there are 26 items on the list. (This is a good travel game, too.)
10. Together with your children, do something for a neighbor or a shut-in. Bake cookies, rake a lawn, or just take time to visit with someone who might be lonely.

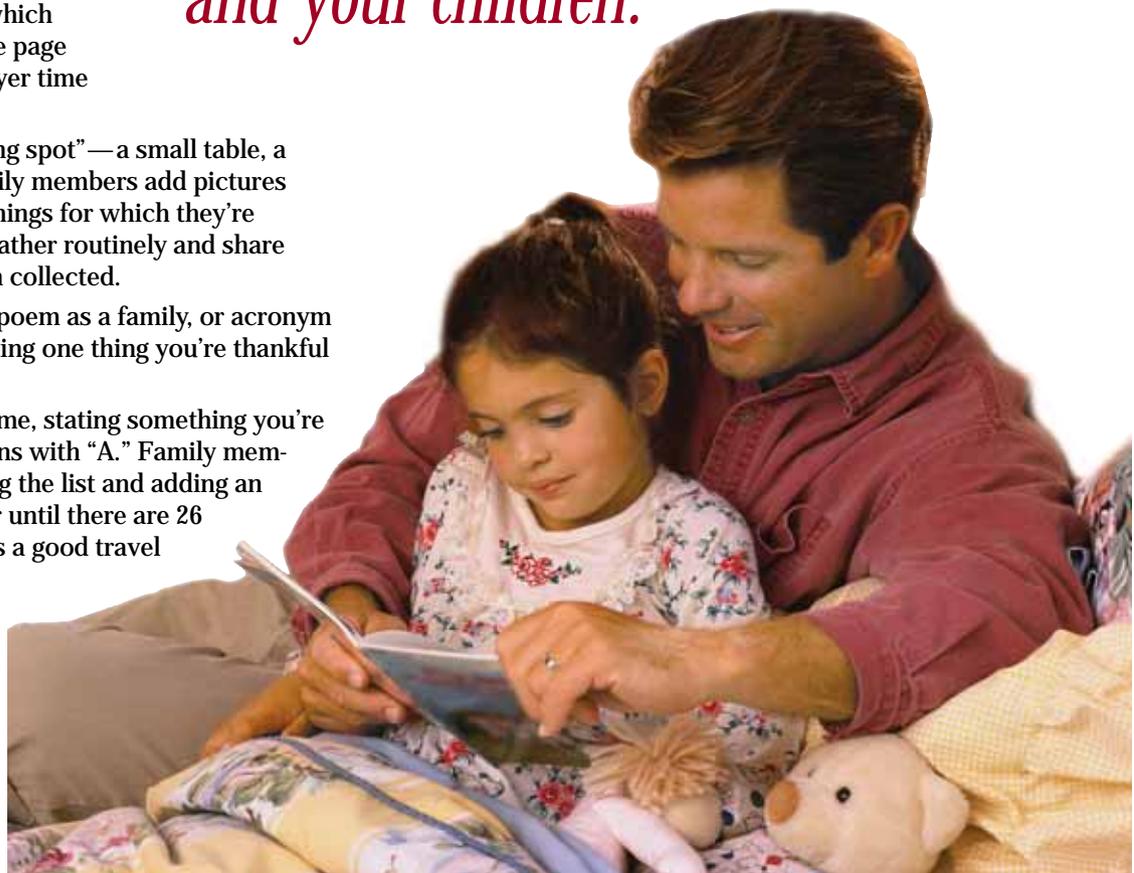
There is no magic formula to make our children thankful. Thankfulness flows from a grateful heart and is a lifelong process. By staying in the Word ourselves and involving our children in it, we will help them to grow in appreciation for all God has given us. The psalms are filled with praise, and thankfulness is a key attitude in the New Testament.

Thankfulness doesn't happen overnight, but God has given us parents the days of childhood to model and teach what He so loves—an attitude of gratitude.



Carol Albrecht is a member of Centennial Lutheran Church, Superior, Neb.

Bedtime prayers build strong habits and memories for you and your children.



HAPPY THANKS-LIVING

by Carol Albrecht

Our annual food-laden tables and family gatherings on Thanksgiving Day serve to remind us of the gracious care of our Lord.

Giving thanks to God, however, should be a daily way of life, not just a yearly festival. And thanking God involves more than a prayer before eating. It involves actions as well as words.

Before we can properly show gratitude to God, we need to realize the reasons why we give thanks. After you read Eph. 2:4-5, explain our main reason for living thankful lives.

Now, make a list of the other primary gifts of God for which you are also thankful. Obviously, there isn't enough room below, even for the gifts you consider most important.

Even with such great blessings, thankfulness doesn't come naturally to our sinful natures. According to the following passages, what enables us to live thankful lives?

2 Cor. 1:21-22 _____

1 John 4:13 _____

What does this special gift of God enable us to do according to Gal. 5:16?

Because the Spirit helps us, what "thanks-living" results do we see in our lives? Read verse 22 of Galatians 5.

Now read Col. 3:15. This verse emphasizes that the peace given by the Holy Spirit leads us to thankfulness. What other aspects of "thanks-living" are mentioned in verses 16 and 17?

When things are going well, it's easier to express an attitude of thanks-living. Why might we find this more difficult to do according to the apostle Paul's counsel in 1 Thess. 5:16-22?

What is Paul's advice in Phil. 4:4-9 to help us through times when thanks-living isn't easy?

According to this Biblical instruction, what benefit do we derive from an attitude of thankfulness, no matter what the circumstances?

As children of God, we want to show praise to Him for His great love and His gift of salvation. But there's another reason we express our gratitude with our lives. How does Paul explain his thanks-living in 1 Cor. 10:32-11:1?



What advice does Peter give us in 1 Peter 2:12?

From these two passages and from 1 Thess. 4:11-12, explain why we want to continually have an attitude of gratitude?

For us as Christians, Thanksgiving isn't just a holiday that comes once a year. Rather, thanks-living is our daily walk with God, made possible by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That sanctified walk causes us not only to praise God, but to live lives that lead others to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Carol Albrecht is a member of Centennial Lutheran Church, Superior, Neb.

THE BOOK OF CONCORD: A SOURCE OF HARMONY



THE FORMULA OF CONCORD

Written in 1577 to settle disputes, this interpretation of the Augsburg Confession shows us how to do theology today.

by Andrew Pfeiffer

The last of the Lutheran Confessions, the “Formula of Concord,” has a focus different from the other documents in the *Book of Concord*. Its primary concern is not with Roman Catholic or Reformed theology but with Lutherans confessing together.

The genius of the “Formula of Concord” is that it shows us 21st-century Lutherans how to do theology today. First, it teaches us to define the issue. Then it seeks clarity by looking at Scripture, the early church, and the confessional writings. On that basis, it makes a clear confession, declaring: “We believe, teach, and confess, ...” “We reject and condemn. ...”

This latter characteristic of the formula sometimes makes us uneasy. We aren’t too sure about rejecting and condemning, even when we’re talking about theological positions and not people. It doesn’t sound loving. We aren’t comfortable drawing boundaries.

However, the formula does not draw boundaries to *stifle* the Gospel. It draws boundaries to *safeguard* the Gospel so that people with troubled consciences will continue to hear its comfort and be warned of the errors that will push them back under the Law. A genuinely pastoral document, the formula has the Gospel at its heart.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA

The roots of the **Lutheran Church of Australia** go back to 1838 with the arrival of immigrants fleeing the Prussian Union. In 1966, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia joined with the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia to form the Lutheran Church of Australia. The church has more than 71,000 baptized members in 540 congregations.

Answering disagreements

In 1537, in his preface to the Smalcald Articles (*The Lutheran Witness*, August ’05, “Luther’s ‘Last Statement’”), Martin Luther spoke of his concern that some who claimed to be Lutheran had twisted his writings to support their views. He said it didn’t really matter while he was alive, because he could teach, preach, and correct where necessary. But in a prophetic utterance he said, “Imagine what will happen after I am dead.”

A genuinely pastoral document, the “Formula of Concord” has the Gospel at its heart.

The events after Luther’s death are summarized by William Moorhead in his “The Formula of Concord Study Guide,” which is part of the Lutheran Confessions series offered by Concordia Publishing House (CPH):

“After Luther’s death (1546) and the Smalcald War (1547), the Lutherans in the Holy Roman Empire were in a precarious position. Without their leader, the pastors and churches faced opposition from the outside and dissension within.

“Although the Lutherans achieved appropriate legal status in the Holy Roman Empire through the agreement known as the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 [they could confess and practice their faith freely], they soon were divided over significant doctrinal issues. It was clear that concord was necessary if the Evangelical church was to survive.”

The two main workers for unity and the chief

authors of the “Formula of Concord” were Jacob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz.

Andreae first wrote *Six Christian Sermons* in 1573 in which he provided analysis of the issues in controversy. Chemnitz, with the help of others, later reworked Andreae’s writings. This document was known as the Swabian-Saxon Concord.

Then in 1576, Lutheran theologians, including Andreae and Chemnitz, met at Torgau, Germany, to further refine the work. A short summary, the “Epitome,” and a comprehensive confession, the “Solid Declaration,” were accepted in 1577 as the complete “Formula of Concord.”

Still relevant and alive

While its history is interesting, the formula’s content is more significant. It contains 12 articles, and during this 425th anniversary of the *Book of Concord*, I encourage you to study the document. You can use secondary resources such as Friedmann Hebart’s *One in the Gospel* (also published by CPH) or Moorhead’s study guide. However, it is best to read the formula itself—especially the Scripture references that form the foundation for what it teaches.

The formula discusses a wide spectrum of topics: original sin, free will, justification, good works, Law and Gospel, the Third Function of the Law, the Lord’s Supper, the Person of Christ, Christ’s descent into hell, ecclesiastical practices, election and foreknowledge, and religious factions and sects.



Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) was a German pastor, a seminary professor, and a strong defender of the faith. He took part in a centrist movement determined to bring peace among the German Lutherans with the publication of the Formula of Concord.

Because early Lutherans had more than their share of disputes, they left us a great confessional legacy.

Why study the formula? It will help you work with a Lutheran approach to mission and conversion (article 2), find the right place for good works in Christian living (article 4), find comfort in being one of God’s elect (article 11), find comfort in the Gospel (articles 3, 7, 8, and 11), and base decision-making in liturgical matters on what God has commanded and instituted (article 10).

Because early Lutherans had more than their fair share of disputes, they left us a great confessional legacy. We have 12 articles on issues still relevant and alive in our own churches. We also have a way of proceeding when we face significant conflict:

1. Work out what the problem actually is.
2. Discover from Scripture and the early church what was taught and what was in error.
3. Reflect again on your current controversy.
4. Make your own good confession both to what is taught and confessed and what is rejected for the sake of keeping the comfort of the Gospel.



Dr. Andrew Pfeiffer is Pastoral Ministry Program director, director of the Rural and Urban Mission Program, and director of Field Education at Australian Lutheran College in North Adelaide, Australia.

TAKING *Ablaze!* AROUND THE WORLD

“Point of Truth” — an LCMS television program — will broadcast the Ablaze! effort to five continents using satellite television.

by Charles Manske

“Point of Truth,” The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s half-hour television worship program, is using eight international *Ablaze!*-themed episodes to encourage Christians to share their faith. Each program will focus on a specific type of opportunity to witness, including to children, the terminally ill, immigrants, and people in crisis situations.

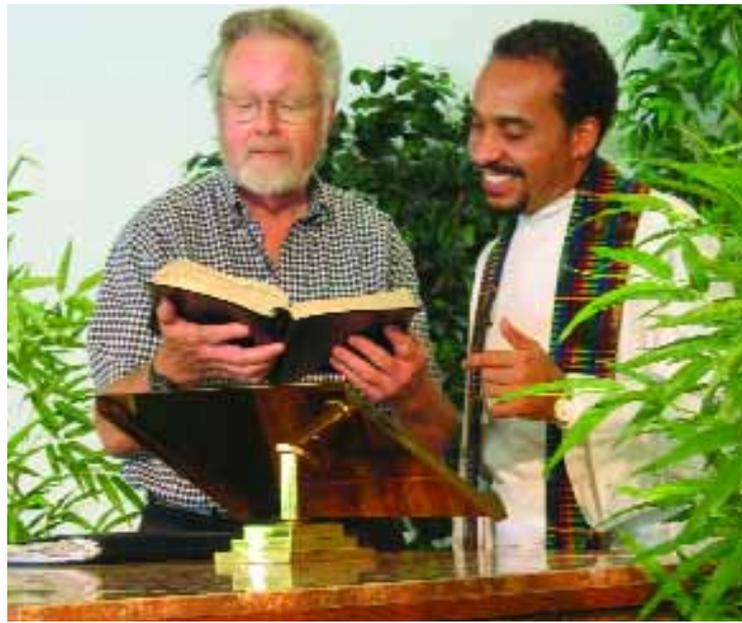
In each of these programs, Dr. John Nunes, research associate for urban ministries with Wheat Ridge Ministries, will focus on Christians’ call to be a witness for Christ to all people.

Ablaze! is a global Lutheran mission movement to share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Running during November and December 2005, the programs will include personal testimonies of witnessing and will feature the choir, musical groups, and bell choir of Concordia University, Irvine, Calif.

In September, “Point of Truth” began its fifth season on DirecTV®.

It airs each Sunday on channel 371, sponsored by the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), with a half-hour worship service featuring LCMS congregations. In the first three years, “Point of Truth” was broadcast only in the United States to a potential audience of 14.5 million people. Then last season, it began reaching out to five continents through six satellites of the Church Channel with a potential audience more than 150 million. People who do not receive DirecTV can watch the program on the Internet at www.thechurchchannel.org during its Sunday broadcast time.



Dr. Ardon Albrecht (left), director and producer of “Point of Truth,” and Dr. John Nunes, featured speaker, prepare for a worship service telecast. Eight new programs sponsored by the Synod’s Board of Missions Services will air this fall with Ablaze! as the theme.

More and more LCMS congregations and members are getting involved with the *Ablaze!* movement. People touched by the Holy Spirit are asked to ignite the flame of evangelism and witness to others as the means of grace are working in their lives.

“Christians need to have the example of witnesses who have brought the Good News of Jesus Christ to others,” said Dr. Ardon Albrecht, the producer and director of the

series. "We have filmed these [personal witnessing] stories for the TV series."

Each of the eight programs begins with Nunes, who often appeared on "Point of Truth" during its first four seasons, interviewing someone who has shared Christ in a specific situation. Rev. Gary Rohwer tells of witnessing to a Muslim woman about Jesus being the answer to her anxiety and sleeplessness. Another story concerns a mother who objects to having her children being taught how to pray in a Lutheran preschool and later becomes the Lutheran preschool director and teaches dozens of other children to pray to Christ.

Rev. Nathan Loesch, a Lutheran chaplain who ministered to dozens of dying soldiers in Viet Nam, teaches how we, as saved people of God, can face pain and death.

The story of how violent death on a high-school campus brought many people face to face with their own mortality is told in a witness by an American Indian pastor, Rev. Richard Latterner.

These inspiring stories are presented to motivate Christians to become involved in the *Ablaze!* movement. Viewers are asked to share their own personal witnessing experiences on the "Point of Truth" Web site: www.pointoftruth.com.

Time and talents

Albrecht, who served as a missionary in Taiwan and the Republic of China, brings a wonderful background to this work. He produced programs in Asia for Lutheran Hour Ministries, its award-winning TV series "This Is the Life," and many of its special programs including "The Little Troll Prince," "Three Days," and "Time Travel Through the Bible." His

extensive series, "Yeshua" was filmed in Israel with Dr. Oswald Hoffmann as the narrator.

As executive producer and host, I believe the "Point of Truth" series would not be possible without Albrecht and his production talents.

Point of Truth TV began in Southern California where volunteers, principally from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League in the San Fernando Valley, still answer the mail, record contributions, and send out premiums. The host congregation for filming and administration is Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Santa Monica, Calif. Although filming and editing of the series is done by professionals in the Hollywood film industry, nearly all other work is done by volunteers who believe in Jesus Christ and His ministry.

The concert choir from Concordia University, Irvine, with Dr. Michael Bush conducting, add their voices to "Point of Truth" worship services.



As Point of Truth TV reaches out to the world with the free gift of salvation that Jesus Christ provides, the Holy Spirit reaches into the hearts and lives of those who have not received these gifts of God.

To order videotapes or DVDs of "Point of Truth" programs, write to: Point of Truth TV, P. O. Box 71, Canoga Park, CA 91305.

Is your congregation interested in appearing on "Point of Truth"? Send an e-mail to Dr. Ardon Albrecht at a-albrecht@sbcglobal.net, or call him (805) 750-9677.

"Point of Truth" broadcast times:

On satellite TV on The Church Channel (channel 371) every Sunday at:

Pacific—12:00 p.m.

Rocky Mountain—1:00 p.m.

Central—2:00 p.m.

Eastern—3:00 p.m.

"Point of Truth" can also be seen on satellite TV carrying TBN programming and on the Internet at www.thechurchchannel.org during its regular broadcast time.

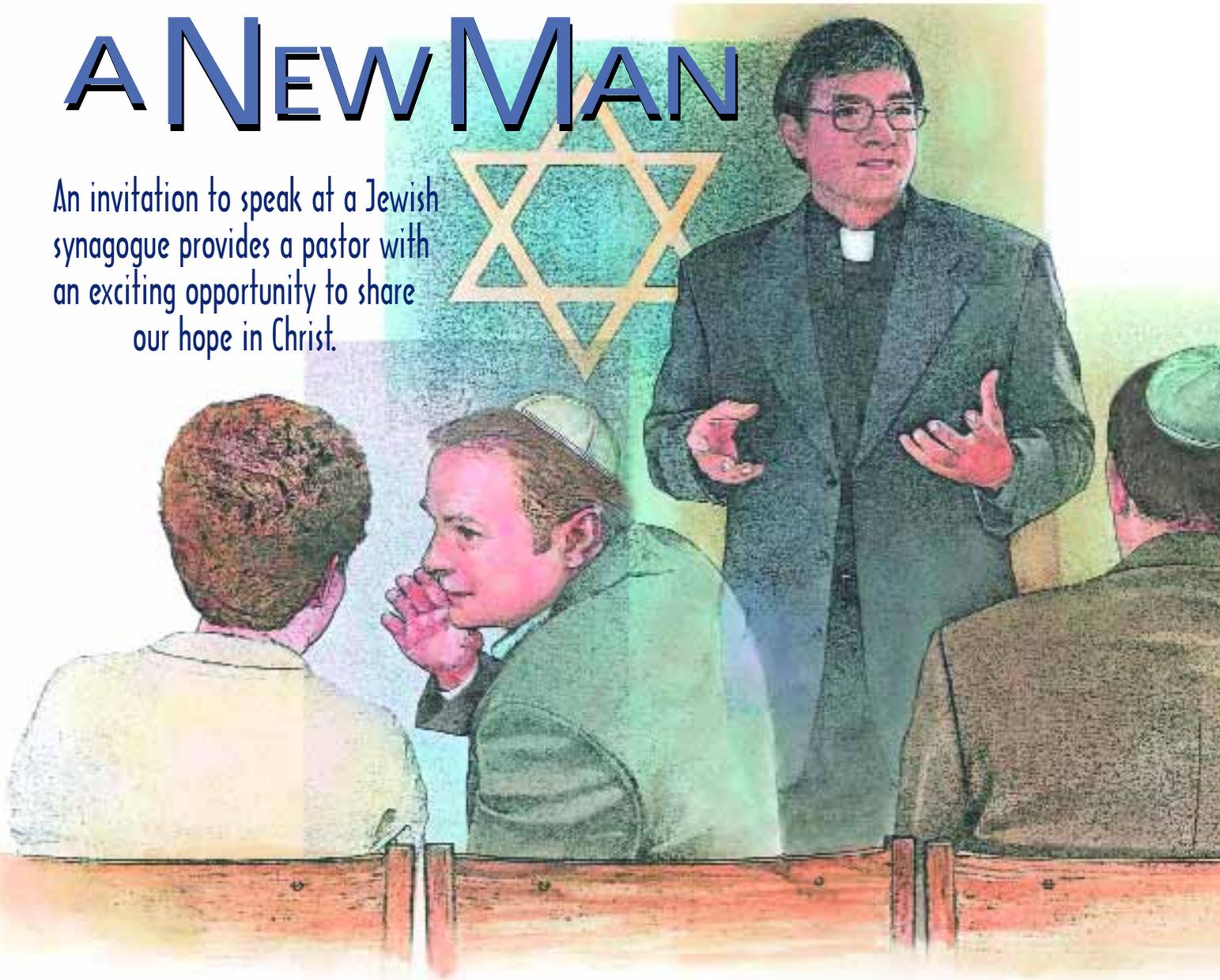
You can access "Point of Truth" on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at www.faithstreams.com.



Dr. Charles Manske, former president of Concordia University, Irvine, is the executive producer of Point of Truth TV.

A NEW MAN

An invitation to speak at a Jewish synagogue provides a pastor with an exciting opportunity to share our hope in Christ.



by Edward J. Balfour

I was startled when a friend, Gary Berenson, asked me to address a gathering of members of his synagogue in Portland, Maine. He is an orthodox Jew and, as surprising at it may seem, the husband of one of my parishioners.

“You grew up in New Orleans as an orthodox Jew”, he explained. “You’ve seen prejudice from both

sides—black and white, Jewish and Christian. Why not come and tell us ‘everything we always wanted to know about Christians but were afraid to ask’?”

I immediately accepted without considering the ramifications.

Then, a few days before my appearance, Gary, who, though not a rabbi, serves as the lay leader of Etz Chaim (The Tree of Life) Synagogue, phoned to warn me: “As a friend, I

must tell you, there are some people who do not want you to come. They want your visit canceled. I still want you to come ... but I thought that you should know.”

My emotions ran high. I recalled the last time I visited a synagogue. It was during my vicarage assignment at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Sayville on Long Island, N.Y. I walked into the orthodox synagogue around the corner to invite the rab-

bis to visit with our evangelism class and explain how Jews viewed Christians who try to evangelize to them.

When I entered the rabbi's study, an older, scholarly looking rabbi sat studying the Talmud at a side table. A younger rabbi sat behind a desk. I introduced myself as the younger rabbi came forward to meet me. I told him who I was. I wished him "*Shalom*."

"I do not like you," the older rabbi said to me without any other greeting. "In fact, I hate you. I hate apostate Jews."



In Paul's shoes

I told this story as I began my presentation at Etz Chaim, then added, "If you hate me, too, I would understand. If I sat where you are, I would hate me."

As I stood on the *bimah*, the platform in the middle of the synagogue, I recalled my *bar mitzvah*. I looked up at the balcony, and it seemed I could see my mother and my grandmother. That day, they were so proud of my educated Jewishness. On my *bar mitzvah*, I began my address, "Today, in the eyes of God, I am a man."

On this occasion, I began by saying, "No matter what anyone tells you, Jews and Christians do *not* worship the

same God. We believe that Jesus is the Christ—the Messiah. As a Jew, your Jewishness is determined by tradition and culture. ... You—all Jews—do *not* believe that Jesus is the Messiah."

Uh-oh. ... What did I just say?

I was dressed as a Christian pastor, and I felt my collar choking me, making me uncomfortable, as it should.

One man, perhaps feeling my anxiety and realizing that I had no choice but say what I had said, shouted jokingly, "Don't worry, we won't stone you."

"Thank you," I replied. "Until you brought it up, I had never even considered it."

Right then, I realized that I was preaching like Paul.

Earning respect

Fifteen years earlier, the rabbis in Sayville grew to like me, respect me. They came to St. John's for the last session of my class. The younger rabbi, who knew the Christian Scriptures better than some Christians, asked: "How do you interpret your Scripture that states, 'The only way to the Father is through the Son?' Do you believe that all Jews are going to hell?"

One of our elders, wanting to show his love for Jews, quickly replied: "I know what the Scriptures say, but it can't possibly mean this. I have some good Jewish friends, and I know that they're not going to hell."

The rabbi's face turned crimson. He pointed his finger at the elder. "Why don't you people believe in your own Bible? Devout Christians we respect. We don't believe that we're going to hell, but it's alright if you do."

As I told this story at Etz Chaim, heads nodded in agreement.

Is dead, dead?

A man in his 40s approached me wearing a *yarmulke* (skull cap). "What are you doing here?" he asked.

I had wondered the same thing.

"You believe that a man is saved by his works," I answered, "by his ability to keep the Commandments. Christians do not. We believe that we are saved by God's grace, [through] the faith that God has gifted to us. We believe that no man is good, that all are born sinful. The only salvation lies in the fact that Jesus died for our sins."

I told the congregation about my Uncle Irving's death, and how I went to the only two rabbis in town, and they failed to quell the doubts of a very religious 15-year-old Jewish boy. Both of them gave me the same answer when I asked about the fate of my beloved uncle:

"Dead is dead. There is no firm hope for an afterlife."

"There is for devout Christians," I explained now to the members of Etz Chaim. "I couldn't get up in the morning if I didn't believe that."

Several elderly members nodded their agreement. A

couple whose 12-year-old-daughter had died of cystic fibrosis were in tears.

"I have a concept of life after death," said a young man who appeared well educated in Judaism by his other comments during my presentation. "If the rabbis had given you a different answer, do you think you would still have become a Christian?" he asked. "I mean, you know that all rabbis have very differing opinions on verses of the Bible. There is no set concept for Jews of life after death."

"No," I answered. "I tried to resist Jesus. I was drawn to the sanctuary of church, not to the doctrine. In fact, I tried not to hear or mention the name of Jesus. I went to church for three years before I was baptized."

"My Baptism was witnessed by 25 curious Jews," I continued. "They wanted to see if I would go through with it."

"After my Baptism, my good friend Kenny Paillet said, 'What have you done? You know, you're still a Jew ... but now you're going to hell.'"

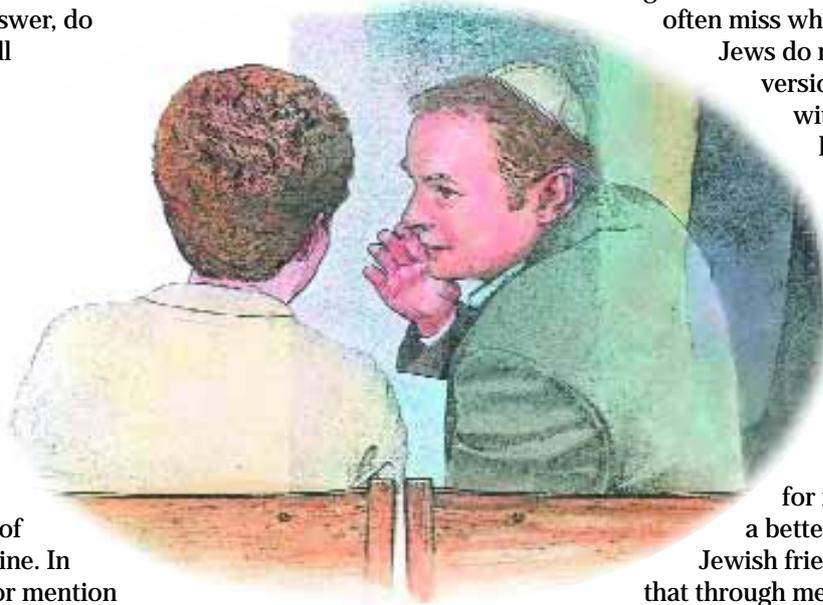
"My reaction to Kenny's question was: 'I didn't do anything. It was God who did it. I am a new man in Christ.'"

"Kenny said, 'The only thing you are is crazy. Maybe God will make an allowance for that.'"

When God calls

"In the time since the Holy Spirit converted me," I told my Jewish audience, "I have been a practicing Christian. But I never thought I would be a pastor in The Lutheran

Church—Missouri Synod. When people ask me when I decided to become a pastor, I tell them I never made that decision anymore than I did to become a Christian. God chooses. God calls. And sometimes, when we listen, we hear Him."



Seeing Christ in you

The rest of the time at Etz Chaim, I was peppered with questions regarding Martin Luther. "Of all Christian denominations, how could you choose to be a Lutheran? Don't you know what Luther said about the Jews?"

I didn't avoid these hard questions. I spoke openly about Luther's frustration with "God's chosen people," while making no excuses for his often offensive rhetoric.

I received a warm reception from the congregation. I was told that I would be invited again. There was a reception that followed. I tried to speak with all of the attendees, but I missed quite a few. I spent most of my time with the couple whose young

daughter had died. I tried to witness that hope that I have learned to survive on—the hope of resurrection. They took my card. They said they would call. I pray they will.

I sometimes get frustrated with the Missouri Synod's effort at evangelism to the Jews. Good intentions often miss what's actually needed.

Jews do not believe in conversion. The only way to witness to a Jew is by having him or her see Christ in you. The Holy Spirit must then convince that person and change his heart and mind so that, like me, he will be saved in spite of himself. I ask that you pray for me, that I might be a better witness to my Jewish friends and family, that through me, more might see and believe in Him.

"On the Sabbath, they (Paul and his companions) entered the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, 'Brothers if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak.'"

Acts 13:14a–15



Rev. Edward J. Balfour, born an Orthodox Jew, was converted by the power of the Holy Spirit and baptized into the Christian faith at the age of 20. He is the pastor of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church, Port Elizabeth, Maine, and serves on the LCMS Board of Directors.

from the PRESIDENT

BY WORD AND DEED

Derek Roberts was among some 20 students from our seminary in Fort Wayne, Ind., who drove to Louisiana in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. They delivered relief supplies and spent a week helping victims start to clean up the mess.

Derek told *Reporter*, our Synod's newspaper, that "heads of households asked us to hold hands with them and their family and to pray with them at the end of the day's work. In Jesus' name, they offered their heartfelt thanks to God with tears for the work we were able to help them with."

It's clear that those who were helped by our students knew what motivated them to give of themselves as they did. They were responding to the grace of God in Christ Jesus. They had given a witness, in word and in deed, to the love of Christ.

In early September when I visited areas struck by Katrina, when I talk to people who have given time and money to help the victims of Katrina and Hurricane Rita, when I meet with church leaders involved in the recovery efforts, this same Christian witness is evident. And I am reminded of our mission statement: "In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ *by word and deed* within our churches, communities, and the world."

Giving that cup (or bottle) of cold water, providing a chain saw, shoveling muck left behind by receding flood waters—as we do all those things for fellow human beings who are hurting and in need, we have an opportunity to say that it is Christ's love that compels us to serve as we do (2 Cor. 5:14). How can we help but speak of "what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20), namely, the love and compassion that our Savior Jesus Christ has shown for us?

Just as our human-care efforts have their emphasis on deeds, the *Ablaze!* movement adopted by our Synod and by our partner and sister churches around the world emphasize the "by word" aspect of our mission. *Ablaze!* is about reaching people—unreached or uncommitted people—with the Gospel, with the One Message that

Jesus Christ alone is the Savior of the world.

Pastor David Davis of St. Luke Lutheran Church, Haslett, Mich., captures the essence of *Ablaze!* in an article he wrote for the Michigan District's publication, *Michigan In Touch*. He writes, in part:

"Quit waiting. Quit running to the mailbox to see if the *Ablaze!* program has arrived. It does not exist. ...

"*Ablaze!* is not a new synodical **program**. There is not a set pattern for you to follow. *Ablaze!* is an '*initiative*.' **It is an idea.**

"And the idea is this: Let us see what would happen if members of our churches and partner churches around the world committed intentionally to share the Gospel with 100,000,000 people between now and the 500th anniversary of the posting of the 95 Theses, which will be celebrated in 2017.

"*Ablaze!* is more of a friendly challenge than anything else. Let us challenge one another to determine to give a clear, personal presentation of the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus, offering them an opportunity to respond. Let's keep count. Let's put ourselves in a position to see the wonderful working of the Holy Spirit through the power of the Gospel in the lives of 100,000,000 people."

Come to think of it, what better example of showing care for others can there be than sharing the Gospel with those who do not know our Lord Jesus Christ? May He bless your witness as you seek to make known His love by word and deed!

Jerry Kieschnick

Lives Transformed through Christ,
in Time ... for Eternity!
John 3:16-17

e-mail: president@lcms.org

Web page: www.lcms.org/president



David McMinn, a second-year student at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, works to remove water-soaked drywall in a Slidell, La., home. He was among students from both LCMS seminaries who traveled to the Gulf Coast to help victims of Hurricane Katrina.