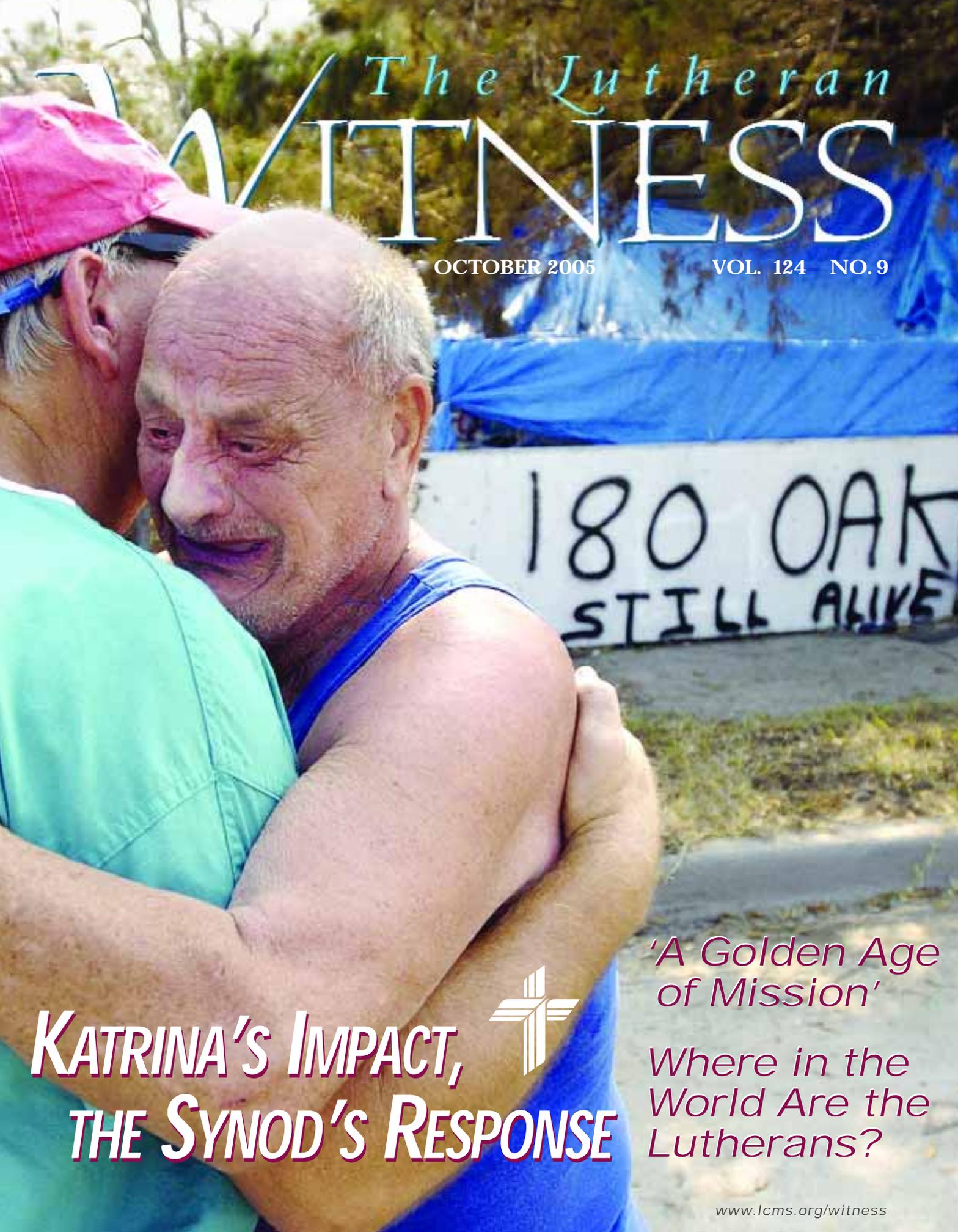


The Lutheran WITNESS

OCTOBER 2005

VOL. 124 NO. 9



**KATRINA'S IMPACT,
THE SYNOD'S RESPONSE**



*'A Golden Age
of Mission'*

*Where in the
World Are the
Lutherans?*



The Lutheran WITNESS

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

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Photo courtesy of Trinity Lutheran Church, Baton Rouge



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Photo courtesy of Anita Reith Stohs



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TO THE LEAST OF THESE

A chaplain who had ministered and witnessed to forgotten people was not forgotten at his funeral. It was a true witness to many.

by Anita Reith Stohs

It was a sweltering summer afternoon as a small group of mourners gathered for the funeral of an elderly man. The room where the service was held was not large, but it seemed adequate for those expected to attend. The city in which the funeral was held was too far for many of the man's relatives, and only a few family members could come.

A brief obituary had appeared in the local paper, but few people were expected. The man being buried was a 90-year-old retired minister, and most of his friends had preceded him in death.

As the time approached for the service to begin, something unexpected happened. One by one, people unknown to the man's family entered the chapel to join in the service. Strangers to the immediate family, but not to the man who had died, these unknown mourners silently filled the seats of the small room.

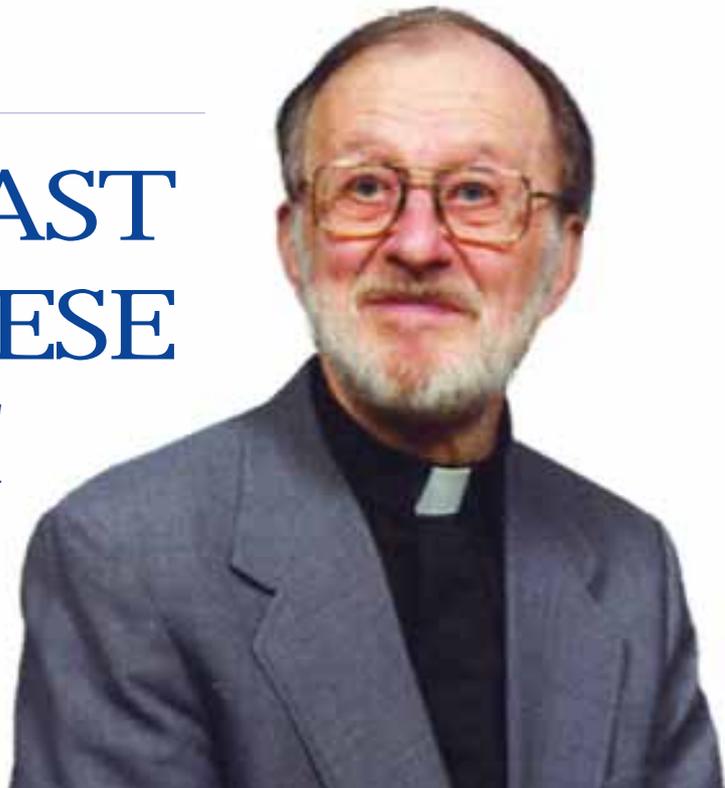
The man they had come to remember was not well known in the city in which he had lived. He had never held important positions in his church hierarchy. He had not even served a specific congregation. As an institutional chaplain, his ministry had not been to people sitting in Sunday-morning pews, but to men and women living on the fringe of society in hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, and other institutions.

For many years, the chaplain had attempted to follow the example of Jesus in reaching out to such people with love and compassion, and those who had experienced or witnessed the grace of God through him had not forgotten. They read of the service and came to be a part of it.

A funeral ultimately speaks to the living, reminding each of us of our own mortality and of our need to look to the cross for eternal salvation and direction for our own life. There were two sermons spoken at the funeral that day, one by a son and the other by those who had unexpectedly come to fill the chapel. Their presence was a wordless witness to God's inclusive love for all His children.

God gives us opportunities to show our love for Him through service to others. It is up to us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to use them. He has called all of us to personally share our faith and hope in His gift of eternal life.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger



In memory of my uncle, Rev. Edgar Martin Roschke (1912-2003), and all institutional chaplains who serve their Lord so faithfully. "Uncle Eddie" once told me that he wanted to be buried holding his baptismal certificate. I will always remember the significance of it.

and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40).

The chaplain whose funeral was held that day has entered the inheritance prepared for him by His Lord and Savior. For those of us who still live, the call to serve our Lord through service to others remains. May God grant each of us the gift of seeing these opportunities and acting on them until we join our Lord in the heavenly kingdom He has prepared for us.



Anita Reith Stohs is a member of Hope Lutheran Church, Shawnee, Kans.



The 'anguish' explained

It should be no secret to anyone that Christ and His teachings are no longer welcome on public-university campuses across America.

*Jack Pierce
Mattoon, Ill.*

THE AUTHOR OF "ANGUISH AND ASSURANCE ON CAMPUS" (August '05) carefully avoided the main issue of why our young people choose to abandon their faith during those formative college years.

It should be no secret to anyone that Christ and His teachings are no longer welcome on public-university campuses across America. While the campus should be a forum for all public debate, a place where tolerance is supposedly the name of the game, the tolerance for Christianity is indeed missing. We should not be surprised that, while living in this spiritually hostile environment, our children turn away from their faith. The bedrock of our Christian faith, creation, as found in the opening verses of Genesis, is routinely dismissed as a fairy tale by most professors. Evolution is the gospel of the university campus in America. If there is no Creator God, then there is no basis for, or need to accept, the Scriptures that follow.

Your children likely were baptized, confirmed, and taught Christian principles at home, but when they enter a public university, they are subjected to wholesale attacks on their faith. Little wonder that young adults who are spiritually sensitive often become confused in this godless arena and sometimes reject their faith.

*Jack Pierce
Mattoon, Ill.*

Recognizing CMS

THANK YOU FOR THE COVER STORY ON our Gospel outreach to the people of Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia ("Land of

Hardships and Miracles," August '05). As usual, Paula Schlueter Ross did a marvelous job capturing the excitement of seeing God's Spirit at work through the Word proclaimed by our missionaries and by the Kyrgyz nationals with whom they work.

One of our entries into the lives of Kyrgyz people is the "medical van" mentioned in the article and illustrated by a photograph. This tractor-trailer unit brings basic medical and dental care to people who, in most cases, have no other health-care. It brings them the opportunity to hear God's Word, too. We would like to publicly thank the Concordia Mission Society, our largest partner in Central Asia, for making this ministry possible. This mission agency provides 100 percent of the funding necessary for the medical trailer, which marks its 10th anniversary October 1. We very much appreciate and thank God for the society's ongoing commitment to Gospel outreach in a remote part of the world.

*Rev. Dr. Robert M. Roegner
Executive Director
LCMS World Mission*

*Rev. John L. Mehl
Eurasia Regional Director
LCMS World Mission*

A two-way wall

THANK YOU FOR THE ARTICLE ON CIVIL religion ("Righteousness and Religion," June/July '05). I would only suggest that one must be careful when declaring that "a total

separation of government and religion is impossible."

There is a popular movement today in American Christianity to interpret the "wall of separation" as a "one-directional wall," meaning that the government cannot interfere with the church, but the church can interfere with the government. In other words, a state-run church is bad, but a theocracy is good. This is very popular among certain groups of Reformed and especially "Christian Reconstructionists."

We must be extremely careful not to get confused by or with this error. The author, Rev. Mark Sell, does a good job of avoiding that confusion by emphasizing that Christians should temper the Kingdom of the Left *through their vocation* and not through their institutional church, lest we lose our precious religious freedom by the establishment of a theocracy.

*Joe Warnke
Dawsonville, Ga.*

'Out of the Shadows'

I ENJOYED READING YOUR COVER STORY "Out of the Shadows of Mental Illness" (June/July '05). I have schizophrenia with depression, and my wife has bipolar disorder.

The public still needs to become educated on how sufferers of mental-health illness are treated. Society has stigmatized these people for many years. People with mental illness generally face a biochemical brain disorder. Many different types of medication, prescribed by informed, caring doctors, are available to correct (not cure) the chemical imbalances in the brain.

I have just returned from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) national convention in Austin, Texas. It was a good experience to meet with other people affected by similar conditions. In recent years, there seems to be a great deal more research being conducted to develop

better medications without side effects.

Parents of children with mental illness will find useful information in NAMI's "Family-to-Family" classes. There is hope of recovery if the church and congregations accept all of God's children and adults with compassion.

*Anonymous
Kansas City, Mo.*

The article on mental illness was welcomed, necessary, and helpful, but it misses something we must consider as a possible cause if we are to understand and effectively treat various mental illnesses.

Why sell out completely to the biological/chemical/secular paradigms and ignore the spiritual element? The Bible teaches that demonic beings influence human beings and work for the father of lies. Symptoms of mental illness are despairing and deceptive thoughts, feelings, and temptations. God's Word says our struggle is against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Heavy reliance on the pharmaceutical approach to treatment is astronomically expensive, and psychotropic drugs can be very destructive to the personality and the mind.

Recognizing symptoms as results of demonic influence and strongholds leads us to use the armor of God, God's Word, and prayer. The devil was so real to Martin Luther that, so the legend goes, he threw inkwells at him. From your article, it appears that Lutherans today don't even consider the demonic as a factor to be reckoned with.

*Rev. Ronald W. Stelzer
Centereach, N.Y.*

We welcome letters that comment on articles in The Lutheran Witness. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Send letters to "Letters," c/o The Lutheran Witness, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to Lutheran.Witness@LCMS.org. Please include your name, postal address, and telephone number.

KATRINA'S IMPACT, SYNOD'S RESPONSE



Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, talks with Bill and Carolyn Cross on the front steps of their home that was literally washed away by a 20-foot storm surge in Bay St. Louis, La.

The scope and savagery of a great storm compel the church to marshal its resources like never before to help the afflicted.

by Matthew Harrison

I stared out over the waves, watching the early-morning sun shimmer on the whitecaps, creating a million sparkles. “Paradise,” I muttered to myself. “This was paradise.”

Stretching out before me lay a beautiful expanse of white sand at the water’s edge. But now a frontage road separated paradise from paradise lost. We had come to survey the carnage of what had been Waveland, Miss.

Five miles inland the interstate overpass showed the watermarks of a storm surge nearly 20 feet deep.

Think about that: 20 feet of water five miles from the shore! Power lines were down, buildings far inland demolished. Tall pines, snapped like toothpicks, lined the highway to Waveland, just as they did throughout a region the size of Great Britain. These battered sentries bore witness to the great truth of Romans 8: “The creation groans in eager expectation of the revelation of the sons of God.”

Save for the guardsmen, police, and relief vehicles, the main drag into Waveland was calm. What civilians there were had gathered about relief-distribution points. I noted the blank, somber stare of a sheriff’s deputy patrolling the devastation.

Orange, spray-painted markings on shattered houses and ruined cars indicated the presence or absence of the dead. Heaps of rubbish were all that remained of the lives, histories, and homes of hundreds of families—*hundreds of thousands* if you count the whole southern coast.

The day before, rescuers had found three people still alive in the rubble of Waveland. I didn’t know whether I should be calling out to survivors or walking in silence as among the dead. As far as I could see in any direction, not a single home stood or even partially stood. It looked like someone had disassembled each house, put all the contents

in a sack, and then strewn the contents cruelly and violently across the ground. I had seen this kind of devastation before—homes literally washed off their foundations—in Sri Lanka, South India, and Indonesia last January.

I was taken aback by some porcelain china, still intact, lying on the ground. How in the world could the better part of a delicate tablesetting survive the demolition of the home that housed it? Where, now, were the fragile lives that had been driven from this home—a home, perhaps, like many others, that had withstood every storm for more than a century? How many of the dear, suffering people from these homes knew the consolation of Christ? How many were my brothers and sisters in the Lutheran faith, members at The Lutheran Church of the Pines in Waveland?

I didn't know whether I should be calling out to survivors or walking in silence as among the dead. As far as I could see in any direction, not a single home stood or even partially stood.

The death toll continues to creep upward. Katrina's devastation is beyond belief. "Is it as bad as the media are portraying it?" I was asked repeatedly upon returning to St. Louis. "It's 100 times worse," I said.

This storm revealed the racial fissures born of centuries of legal racism and social disorder suffered by many in the Deep South, but most intensely by the under-class. The congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod affected by Katrina span the class, cultural, and racial divide. As many as 50 LCMS parishes either suffered heavy damage or were otherwise thrown into the turmoil of the storm's wake. Some 100 LCMS parochial schoolteachers have been displaced and are without work. More than two dozen LCMS pastors were displaced, many with their homes severely damaged. A good number of these same pastors and teachers have been deeply engaged in rescue efforts, caring for the needy and accommodating the refugees in their areas.

About 1,800 LCMS parochial schoolchildren have been displaced. Synod parishes throughout the region and beyond are leading—or at least participating in—the distribution of aid and the housing of refugees. Our schools in Houston, Baton Rouge, and elsewhere are swelling with displaced students, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran. The size and circumstances of this storm have forced a new paradigm of response upon the Missouri Synod.

Our church body has enormous national capacity in our



Rev. Adam Cooper looks over the damage at the fellowship hall at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Gulfport, Miss. The sanctuary suffered only minor roof damage, but the foyer of the fellowship hall was destroyed. Rev. Cooper was planning on retiring in January, but is rethinking his plans in view of the overwhelming losses of many of the church's members.



Scenes from Waveland, Miss.: (top) tombs floated away from their cemeteries, some of them opening and spilling their caskets; (bottom) the spray-painted designation on this car means no dead people were found inside.



church workers, membership, structures, and institutions. The magnitude of Katrina has offered LCMS World Relief and Human Care the opportunity to apply the maximum capacity of aid to those affected by the storm.

The Synod's Southern District office and leadership were struck particularly hard by the hurricane and floods, with several staff sustaining significant loss, including District President Kurtis Schultz. After quick deliberation, LCMS World Relief and Human Care, Synod President Gerald B. Kieschnick, and the Council of (District) Presidents put into action a coordinated district-

response plan.

Each of the Synod's 35 districts has been assigned specific congregations, schools, and church workers from affected congregations. The five-fold plan calls for:

Prayer—the whole Synod asking for God's help with the assigned congregations, schools, and church workers;

Presence—an immediate presence of pastoral care for pastors and others on site;

Work—in the form of volunteers from districts to meet immediate, critical, and long-term needs;

Advocacy—making sure church workers and laity are getting access to state and church resources; and,

Funds—meeting the financial needs of those who need help, with LCMS World Relief and Human Care leading the way in addressing the most pressing cases.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, and owing in no small part to hardworking staff and volunteers, the response of LCMS World Relief and Human Care to Katrina has been unprecedented. In terms of the scale



Synod President Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick comforts Becky Schultz as her husband, Rev. Kurtis Schultz, Southern District president, takes a break from the disheartening task of trying to salvage items from their home in Slidell, La.

PRESIDENT KIESCHNICK VISITS KATRINA SITES

The hurricane hit and the levees broke when I was in Berlin, attending a conference of the Synod's worldwide partner churches, the International Lutheran Council. Returning home late Saturday night, Sept. 3, and following the Sunday installation of Dr. Dale Meyer as president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, I drove to the St. Louis airport early Monday morning (Labor Day) to catch a flight to Baton Rouge.

In preparing for the trip, I had called Rev. Kurtis Schultz, president of the Synod's Southern District, based in New Orleans, and Rev. Matthew Harrison, head of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, to ask what I might bring. "Chainsaws!" they replied. To the credit of American Airlines—in the person of manager-on-duty and LCMS member Paul Hechsel—I was able to check eight 20-inch

Husqvarna and Poulan chainsaws, purchased the night before by my senior assistant, with the \$80 extra-baggage surcharge for each generously waived by the airline.

Pastor Scott Schmieding of Trinity Lutheran Church, Baton Rouge, met me upon my arrival. Trinity's future expansion site is now serving as the temporary office of the Southern District; the actual district office, a stone's throw from the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain, was unreachable and thought (at the time) a total loss. After visiting his church, we began a tour of some of the LCMS congregations affected in the area.

At Holy Trinity in Covington, La., volunteers from that parish and from Trinity, Baton Rouge, were unloading supplies brought in by trucks of the Orphan Grain Train, a Recognized Service Organization of the Synod based in Norfolk, Neb. The non-perishable food and clothing were quickly and gratefully received by members of the Covington community.

That afternoon, we visited Bethany in Slidell, whose damage was obvious but not as serious as in other places. We also visited and prayed with District President Schultz and his wife, Becky, at their home in Slidell, the interior of which was hip deep in water and muck, resulting in the total loss of all of their furnishings and appliances, along with serious damage to the home itself. After an evening worship service at Trinity, Baton Rouge, I spent the night at Pastor Schmieding's home with him, his wife, Susan, and their children, Jenna and Paul.

The next day, Tuesday, was spent consulting with President Schultz and other district leaders on how best to manage the incredible volume of supplies and resources streaming in from LCMS congregations and other sources

of the relief being sent and the help being provided to thousands of hurting people, the capabilities of the Synod have swung into action like never before, and that includes the volunteer capacity of LCMS World Mission and the strength of the Lutheran Laymen's League and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. The scope of this catastrophe requires nothing less.

Our partnership with the Orphan Grain Train has helped to get millions of dollars of food and other aid on the ground *exactly where requested and needed most*. This aid is helping LCMS communities and communities well beyond the LCMS. Through Lutheran Social Services of the South, headed by Dr. Kurt Senske (who also serves as chairman of the Board of LCMS World Relief and Human Care), Chicago-based Lutheran Disaster Response is poised to make a huge impact not only on affected LCMS people but also on many outside the scope of the Synod.

As I write this, I am aware that many of our pastors, teachers, and other church workers are suffering deeply. They also are giving of themselves in heroic and selfless

around the country. The inflow of goods—and the efforts of LCMS volunteers to receive and organize those goods—was challenging to manage but gratifying to behold.

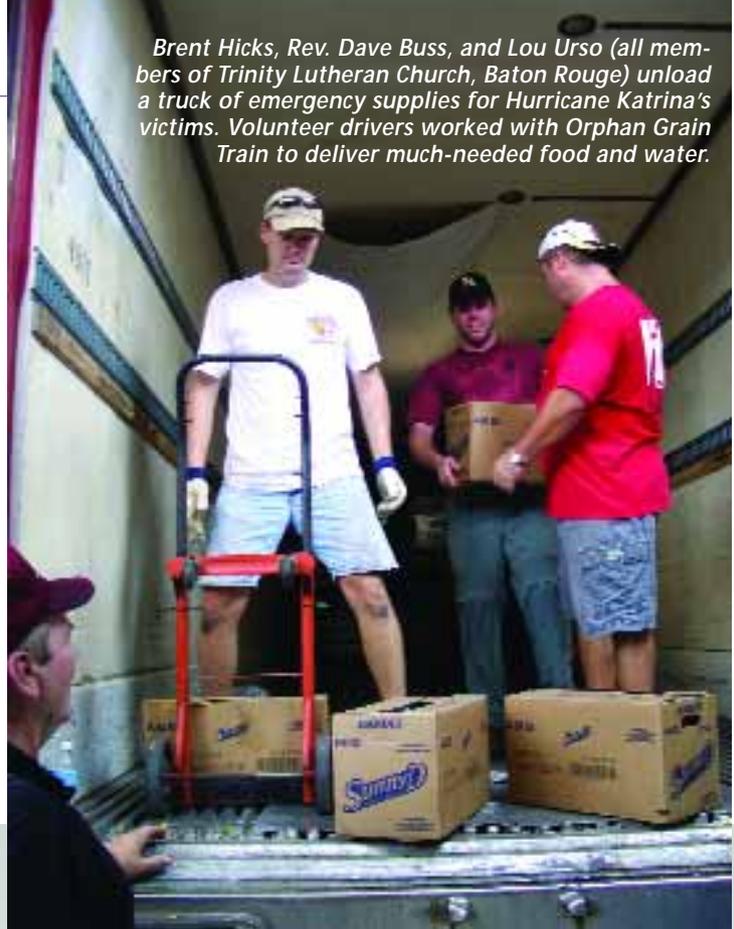
One of the great stories coming out of New Orleans that week concerned the 100 people rescued, by the grace of God, from the above-ground “basement” of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in the French Quarter. These people, shepherded by Pastor David Goodine, were cooped up for seven days not just by flood waters but by roaming gangs of looters and snipers in the area. For a closer look at this dramatic account, please see the sidebar story by Kim Krull.

A big concern during my time in Louisiana was not knowing the whereabouts of all the LCMS pastors and teachers who had evacuated. We have since heard from nearly all of them. The Synod will do everything in its power to sustain these faithful workers and their families, financially and otherwise, until such time that they are restored to their normal ministries.

Lutheran elementary and especially high-school students displaced by Katrina, many of them coming from Metairie Lutheran High School, are being absorbed by scores of other LCMS schools around the nation. By itself, Trinity, Baton Rouge, welcomed more than 40 students at a cost to the congregation of \$150,000—a great leap of faith. Forty-five orphans and special-needs children—one child being just two years old—evacuated from a now-ruined Lutheran social-services home in New Orleans, are being marvelously provided and cared for by the Lutheran Social Services of the South Bokenkamp Adolescent Care Center in Corpus Christi, Texas, which had just completed an expansion with exactly 45 beds!

Many of our pastors and members in affected areas of

Brent Hicks, Rev. Dave Buss, and Lou Urso (all members of Trinity Lutheran Church, Baton Rouge) unload a truck of emergency supplies for Hurricane Katrina's victims. Volunteer drivers worked with Orphan Grain Train to deliver much-needed food and water.



Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama had four to five feet of water in their houses and no flood insurance. This included Pastor Eric Hollar at Good Shepherd in Biloxi, Miss., the parish I served upon graduating from the seminary. Flood insurance generally isn't available from private insurers in many parts of the Gulf Coast; the only insurance to be had is from the federal government, and even here the maximum coverage isn't very high. Restoring the lives of our uninsured people—so that they, in turn, can help to restore the lives of others—will depend in great measure on the generosity of their brothers and sisters throughout the Synod.

For now, the main challenge is identifying and helping those in need and coordinating the distribution of contributed goods from the generous hearts of LCMS people in the best-possible fashion. I take great comfort in knowing—and I have seen this with my own eyes, not just with Katrina but in other disasters as well, including 9–11 and the South Asian tsunami—that the pastors, educators, relief workers, and members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will respond to the incredible human need generated by this horrific storm as God has blessed them.

The Synod's mission statement says it well: *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.*

— Rev. Gerald B. Kieschnick
President



The "chain saw brigade" from Trinity Lutheran Church, Baton Rouge, prepares to go to work helping other storm victims in nearby Covington, La. They are, from left to right, Jime Dartez, Eric Goodman, Danny Dwyer, Dewayne McGehee, and Trent McGehee.



Rev. Matthew Harrison delivers five gallons of gasoline to Dale Kohlman, a member of Lutheran Church of the Pines, Waveland, Miss., where flood water was six feet deep. Gasoline was nearly non-existent along the coast due to power outage. Kohlman was living in a parking lot in his RV after the hurricane.



Joe Buss volunteers his help in an emergency food bank set up at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Covington, La.

ways. They have been without pay for weeks. Our Southern District is facing its greatest challenge, with its staff providing leadership under the most arduous of circumstances. Congregation after congregation is serving its broader community, caring for displaced people, and volunteering to clean and repair homes.

I plead with all congregations of the LCMS that we not limit our gifts to a single door offering. The affected parishes are both suffering and serving in Christ-like fashion; they need our significant and continued support. I am frankly in awe of what Christ is accomplishing amidst the chaos and pain of Katrina.

Such is the way Christ works. In Mark's Gospel, no one (save the demons) understood what it meant that Jesus was the Son

The capabilities of the Synod have swung into action like never before, and that includes the volunteer capacity of LCMS World Mission and the strength of the Lutheran Laymen's League and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

of God. Read Mark. They all got Jesus wrong. Peter came close only to chastise Jesus for speaking of the necessity of His suffering and death in Jerusalem. Peter merited the strongest rebuke Jesus gave anyone in the New Testament: "Get behind me Satan!" It was finally the centurion who saw Jesus dying on the cross who got it right: "Truly, this man was the Son of God!"

It is in suffering that Christ reveals Himself as our Savior. It is in suffering that He comes closest to us with His word and precious Gospel. He comes closest to us when we, in His name and stead, serve one another in love. "Whatever you have done to the least of these my brethren, you have done it also unto me."

Luther wrote something profound about what it means to be in the fellowship of the church when there is suffering: "When Christ instituted the sacrament, he said, 'This is my body, which is given for you; this is my blood, which is poured out for you. As often as you do this, remember me.' It is as if he were saying, 'I am the Head; I will be the first to give himself for you. I will make your suffering and misfortune my own and will bear it for you, so that you in your turn may do the same for me and for one another, allowing all things to be common property, in me, and with me. And I leave you this sacrament as a sure token of all this, in order that you may not forget me, but daily call to mind and admonish one another by means of what I did and am still doing for you, in order that you may be strengthened, and also bear one another in the same way.'"

May God continue to bring untold love, hope, and resurrection joy out of this mystery of misery and this world of sin, death, and the devil.



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

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The letter below was received by officials of LCMS World Relief and Human Care on September 15th. We thought it worth sharing with *The Lutheran Witness* readers.

Thank you. — Editor

Congress of the United States

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

To Our Fellow Members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod:

As fellow members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we thank you for your response to the Katrina disaster and encourage all members of our Synod to pray for the victims and relief workers. Also, we encourage you to help in any way you can, including through your financial gifts to LCMS World Relief.

We have been impressed by the efforts of LCMS World Relief. We applaud the work of our Synod's Southern District. We are grateful for the stories of LCMS congregations and their members who have risen to the occasion of showing mercy to those whose lives have been so dramatically disrupted. We know that quite a number of LCMS churches in the Gulf Coast region were severely damaged. We know that many Pastors and other professional church workers have suffered personal loss. We know that some members of those congregations may have died and that survivors may have lost all their earthly possessions. We join you in our common concern for all those who have been affected by the disaster, including our brothers and sisters in the LCMS family.

As Members of the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives, we pledge our efforts to assist in any way we can. We express our thanks to you for your outpouring of love and concern. And, we encourage you to continue your support of LCMS World Relief so that we, as LCMS Lutherans, can respond to the needs that exist in the wake of hurricane Katrina.


The Honorable Conrad Burns
United States Senator, Montana


The Honorable David Bonior
United States Congressman, Washington


The Honorable John Shimkus
United States Congressman, Illinois

September 14, 2005



To send gifts to help Hurricane Katrina survivors through LCMS World Relief and Human Care:

U.S. Mail: LCMS World Relief and Human Care, P.O. Box 66861
St. Louis, MO 63166-9810

Credit Card Gift Line: 1-888-930-4438

Online: <http://worldrelief.lcms.org>

KATRINA 'LIKE A MONDAY NIGHT MOVIE'

A dramatic rescue ends an anxious week of waiting in an LCMS church basement.

by Kim Krull

After weathering a harrowing week that began with a hurricane and climaxed in a dramatic military escort from the basement of St. Paul Lutheran Church in New Orleans, Rev. David Goodine says he is feeling a bit overwhelmed but determined to use his ministry to help rebuild his devastated community.

"We want and need to return and be part of rebuilding the community," Goodine said via e-mail after he and about 100 other Hurricane Katrina survivors were evacuated from the church basement Sept. 3 by a military convoy.

"We have all sorts of stories of grace, of love and mercy in our midst," Goodine said of the ordeal. "We came together in a way that was pretty cool."

Those stories began when Pastor Goodine and his family scrapped their plans to evacuate and kept open the church, located in the Faubourg Marigny neighborhood near the French Quarter, in response to people from the congregation and community seeking refuge there. For seven days, the church provided food and shelter to people who included the elderly, the sick, and those who had no means to leave the city.

Also in the group were Pastor Goodine's wife, Elizabeth; the couple's sons Jacob, Adam, and Samuel; and daughter-in-law Leah. Jacob, who is in the Army, had just returned from a tour in the Middle East.

The St. Paul evacuees endured a week without electricity or running water. Communication with the outside world was limited. More than rising floodwaters, escalating neighborhood violence kept the fearful group inside the church door.

Worried relatives sent a frantic call to LCMS World Relief and Human Care, which launched persistent pleas for assistance to the Louisiana State Police, the National Guard, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and even the White House.

At one point, LCMS World Relief/Human Care Executive Director Rev. Matthew Harrison and Rev. Scott Schmieding, pastor of Trinity Lutheran, Baton Rouge, barged into a local command station where Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco was meeting with disaster-response officials.

Harrison also issued a call for help to Chaplain Steve Lee, executive director of Peace Officer Ministries, an LCMS

mission agency. Lee, a former law-enforcement official who was in New Orleans assisting with relief efforts, alerted First Sgt. Buren "Rick" Moore of the Louisiana National Guard to the growing urgency at St. Paul.

With lights and automatic weapons flashing, a convoy of 10 trucks loaded with National Guard troops and Border Patrol agents rolled up to the church at 8 p.m. that Saturday. Pastor Goodine, his family, and other hurricane survivors safely exited the church.

Another 80 anxious neighborhood residents soon



LCMS Chaplain Steve Lee, far right, executive director of Peace Officer Ministries, and First Sgt. Buren "Rick" Moore of the Louisiana National Guard, second from left, played key roles in the evacuation of more than 100 people from St. Paul Lutheran Church in New Orleans, La., one week after Hurricane Katrina. St. Paul's pastor, Rev. David Goodine, second from right, and his son, Jacob, far left, helped turn the church basement into a refuge for hurricane survivors fearful of floodwaters and neighborhood violence.

emerged from their homes and joined the evacuation.

"It was like a Monday night movie," Barbara Below, director of Social Ministry Organizations with LCMS World Relief/Human Care, said of the evacuation effort she helped set into motion from the ministry headquarters.

Today, Pastor Goodine is staying with family in Houma, La., and working out of Grace Lutheran Church. Back in New Orleans, St. Paul sports a severely damaged steeple and roof.

Harrison thanked everyone who played a role in the St. Paul rescue, giving a special nod to Barb Below for her "tireless efforts to reach out in love and mercy to a pastor and his flock in a desperate time of need."

"We saw devastation beyond belief. It was like the tsunami all over again," said Harrison, who flew to Louisiana and Mississippi immediately after the hurricane to begin needs assessments and help coordinate LCMS relief work. "Many, many huge challenges remain, but, with the Lord's help, a lot of good also is happening."



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



THE CROSS IN L.A. COUNTY

Los Angeles politician and LCMS member Michael Antonovich defends Southern California's Christian heritage and urges fellow Christians to partake in the political process.

In mid-2004, the American Civil Liberties Union informed the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors that it would take the county to court if it failed to remove a small cross from the county's official seal.

Along with a large image of Pomona, the Roman goddess of orchards and gardens, the seal, adopted in 1957, included a series of panels depicting important aspects of the county's history, with the cross signifying the role of California's early Spanish missions.

Under pressure from the ACLU, and in spite of the pleas of residents, the five-member county board voted to eliminate the cross and redesign the seal, changing Pomona to an American Indian maiden and replacing the cross (which earlier had appeared with the Hollywood Bowl and two stars) with a Spanish mission building conspicuously lacking a cross. The vote was three to two.

One of the dissenting voters was Michael Antonovich, a veteran county supervisor and a member of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Arcadia. Antonovich believes the protest against the cross was nothing more than an effort to rewrite history by stripping Los Angeles County of its religious heritage.

As a supervisor, Antonovich helps govern a county that is home to more than 10.2 million people, making it

the largest county in the nation. In size, its population is exceeded by only eight of the nation's 50 states. The county's budget approaches \$20 billion annually.

Antonovich's own district is twice the size of Rhode Island, and he represents more than 2 million people in 24 cities and 66 unincorporated areas.

Rev. J. Thomas Lapacka, executive director of the LCMS Board for Communication Services, and Dr. Charles L. Manske, executive producer of the Synod's satellite TV program "Point of Truth," sat down with Antonovich in mid-August to discuss the controversy over the cross, the importance of Christian education in an increasingly secular society, and the role of Christians in public service. An edited version of that wide-ranging conversation appears here.

LW: How does your Christian faith come to bear on the work you do?

ANTONOVICH: As a Christian, you have an ethical and moral foundation on which you pattern your decision-making responsibilities.

LW: You have worked hard in opposing the ACLU in removing the cross from the county seal. Where does that effort stand?

ANTONOVICH: Proponents of the county seal with the cross are trying to have the issue placed on the ballot so the people can vote on whether to retain the cross on the seal. By mid-September, they need about

170,000 to 200,000 voters' signatures on an initiative to place the measure on the ballot. If they succeed, the question will be on the June 2006 ballot. I believe it will pass, because I have found Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists who support retaining the cross because it depicts the history of our county. It's not a means of forcing people to believe a particular religion. If the initiative qualifies, I believe we'll get a 70- to 80-percent vote in support of the cross on our seal.

LW: Los Angeles is a diverse region both culturally and religiously. What's it like being a Christian political leader in such an environment?

ANTONOVICH: We have a lot of Christians here, and we have a lot of non-Christians. Being a supervisor is like being the president of a nation or the governor of a state. We're involved with growth and development; with transportation issues; with building, residential, commercial, and industrial projects; and with international trade. In Los Angeles County, we have the second-largest



number of consuls general in the country—close to 90. Many foreign leaders visit here. We encounter representatives from all over the world.

LW: A major issue today is illegal border crossings from Mexico. Many people who arrive here illegally are in search of economic opportunities. How do you reconcile the Christian attributes of charity and kindness toward others with the fact that there are laws against illegal border crossings?

ANTONOVICH: In order to have a stable society, you have to have rules and regulations. That's part of the democratic process. Los Angeles County has more than 1 million illegal aliens. These individuals have impacted our jails, our schools, and our housing market. What the United States ought to be doing is using its economic leverage with Mexico to have Mexico reform its policies so that Mexican citizens have an opportunity to grow up and invest in their future without breaking the law by coming here illegally.

What I believe the church—and by that I mean the entire Christian community—should be doing is exercising its influence with Mexico to break down its culture of graft and corruption. Mexico's leaders need to stop sending so much money to Swiss bank accounts. They need to begin investing in their country. I

believe our free-trade programs will enhance economic opportunities in the future, but in the meantime we need to use our national economic policies to provide incentives for Mexico to reform—and disincentives if they don't.

LW: You're a strong supporter of parochial schools—Lutheran schools. In an urban setting such schools can be very helpful. What is your perspective on parochial education?

ANTONOVICH: I believe our churches should invest more of their resources in preschool through 12th grade programs. It's important that our young children have an environment in which they're able to learn about Jesus and the Christian faith.

Public schools are really oriented toward secularism. So it's vital that churches establish preschools—on their church properties—and through educational scholarships encourage their youth, and the youth of the community, to participate in Christian education.

LW: You have defended human life in the public arena. What are your positions on abortion and capital punishment?

ANTONOVICH: I support capital punishment. As C.S. Lewis pointed out in *Mere Christianity*, in the commandment "Thou shall not kill," the Hebrew word for "kill" refers to premeditated murder. With regard to

pro-life issues, a child has rights under the Constitution regardless of age, and a child—unless it's to save the life of the mother—has a right to life, and the government should be involved in protecting that life. The only time there ought to be a question is when the mother's life is in danger.

LW: You discovered C.S. Lewis during your college years, correct?

ANTONOVICH: Yes.

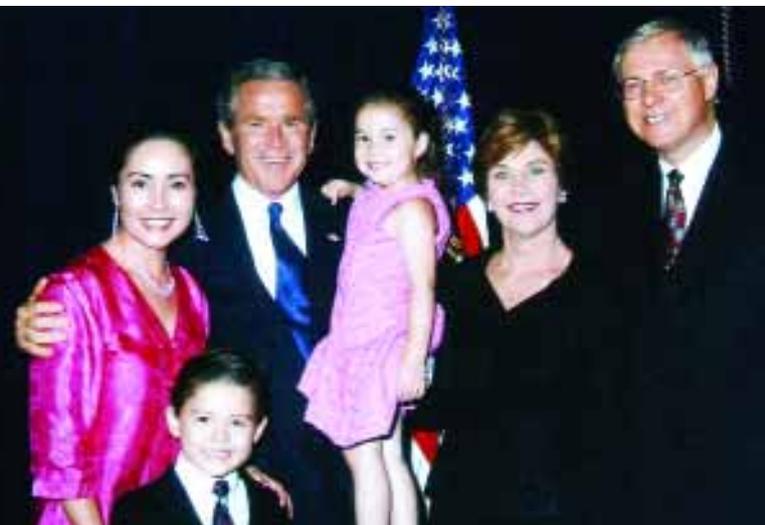
LW: How did he affect you?

ANTONOVICH: He is a good resource, a foundation, an individual whose writings were able to provide a compass in growing to maturity. And that's why it's interesting that Hollywood is producing "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe." Hopefully, churches will encourage their members to see the film, because a large market draw will allow his other books to be filmed, as they have done with the "Harry Potter" series.

LW: You have had a successful career in public service. How should Christians view their role in society, in being involved in civic activities?

ANTONOVICH: The United States is based upon the blood and sacrifice of people of every race, color, and creed. We owe it to those who have made those great sacrifices to get involved in the political process by being registered and voting and expressing our views to our representatives. And if you have the time, run for office—be it a school board, a water board, a city or county legislative position, or a state or federal position. If we stay involved, our country will be enriched and strengthened in sustaining the freedoms we have been blessed with.

There are bad people in the church. There are bad people in politics. There are bad people in the private sector and in the public sector. And all you need for evil to be perpetuated is to have good people stay on the sidelines and not get involved.



Besides his role as supervisor, Antonovich has served in the California legislature, chaired his state's Republican party, and been appointed to several presidential commissions. He devotes much of his spare time to working on behalf of retarded children. Here, joined by his wife, Christine, and children, Michael and Mary, he poses with the President and First Lady.

'A GOLDEN AGE OF MISSION'

Will
Give
You

Rev. Joe Sullivan, pastor of New Beginnings Lutheran Church in Gray Summit, Mo., preaches at a worship service on September 18. The congregation is considering a move from its current storefront church and its desire to continue "church planting."

by Roland Lovstad

One of the Synod's newest congregations—New Beginnings Lutheran Church in Gray Summit, Mo.—has already set its sights on planting more congregations.

"Our goal is to multiply churches, not to become a megachurch," remarks Rev. Joe Sullivan, who started the mission five years ago by inviting people to Bible study in his home. Chartered by the Synod last April, New Beginnings averages 100 people in worship and recently received an LCEF loan to purchase five acres.

"We're at a point where it is more economical to purchase land and build than to rent," Sullivan says. "Hopefully, a new building will not be a liability," he adds, noting that the congregation doesn't want to become too comfortable. "The building is a means to an end, a base of operations for church planting. We specifically want to reach the

Fueled by such concepts as "mission outposts," "Groups Ablaze!" and new strategies in land acquisition, LCMS planners see a renaissance in church planting and growth.

unreached. We envision area plants of other new congregations."

New Beginnings is about 20 miles west of the Interstate beltway surrounding St. Louis. It was "daughtered" by St. Mark Lutheran Church in nearby Eureka, and it illustrates the concept of congregations serving as "mission outposts" that extend the message of God's love in Jesus Christ.

New congregations reach people

New congregations are significant in the *Albaze!* initiative to share the Gospel with 50 million people in the United States (and 100 million

worldwide) by 2017, explains Dr. Robert Scudieri, associate executive director of the National Ministry Team of LCMS World Mission. The goal is to plant 2,000 new congregations in the United States during the next 12 years.

New churches were a key part of growth during the 1950s as Baby Boom families moved to suburbs. Although LCMS membership has declined slowly since 1972, Scudieri says new congregations forestalled greater losses. A study of congregations started between 2000 and 2004 shows they grew by 60 percent in worship attendance and 40 percent in baptized membership.

"The goal of 2,000 new congrega-

tions was not pulled out of the air,” Scudieri says. “The younger churches are reaching out and growing and touching people. We should have 20 percent of our congregations less than 25 years old.” He says the Synod needs to plant 180 new congregations annually to replace those that close or plateau.

Looking for something they can trust

Plans for 3,000 new homes could potentially double the population of Chino Valley, about 20 miles north of Prescott, Ariz. Since May, about 30 people who worship on Saturday night form the core for the new Saving Grace Lutheran Church. Some are members of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Prescott or Trinity Lutheran Church in Prescott Valley, which are helping to plant Saving Grace.

“God is providing the resources. The most important things are an attitude and people,” says Rev. Andrew Byars, pastor of Shepherd of the Hills.

With affordable home prices, Chino Valley attracts young families, and that means opportunities to share Jesus. Byars says the families are looking for integrity, honesty, and truth — “things the church should be.”

He adds, “From my experience, there is more ownership and more support on-site when congregations start congregations. In my opinion, congregations starting congregations is how it works best.”

Covenants with large congregations

“Congregations were doing this church planning in our early years, and I think that’s where it belongs,” observes Johannes Mengsteab, LCMS World Mission national director for new mission field development. One of Mengsteab’s assignments is to recruit 10 percent of the healthiest and strongest LCMS congregations and challenge them to plant three or four congregations during the next 12 years.

Later this month, district mission executives, seminary staff, and pastors of planting churches will meet to outline a process for selecting congregational leaders and training them to plant churches. The seminaries will be asked to help train mission planters through distance education.

“Even rural congregations can be involved,” Mengsteab says. “These are congregations that can ‘go’ through prayer, resources, and sending. There is a place for every congregation to be involved.”

Reviving a mission attitude

Existing congregations also are envisioned as part of the “mission outpost” momentum. “Groups *Ablaze!*” is one effort to revitalize mission.

Coordinated by Rev. Roger Altenberger, director of church revitalization with LCMS World Mission,

“Groups *Ablaze!*” was tested early this year in the Mid-South and New Jersey districts. It begins with a six-week Bible study that emphasizes small groups in congregations. The effort is expanding to other districts.

“Approximately 50 percent of the 6,100 congregations in the Synod have reported one — or no — adult baptism in the past year. They are experiencing a plateau or decline in membership,” Altenberger explains. “As we looked at the statistics, we asked what we could do with congregations to recapture their first love.”

He said the project has two steps. One is self-determination to be in mission. A second is engaging people to reach out to unchurched friends, family, and neighbors.

One pilot congregation was Our Savior Lutheran Church in Fair Lawn, N.J., where 35 people participated in four small groups last spring. Rev. Terry Herzberg calls them “a great introduction to reconnect people with their personal sense of values and to challenge them to think about the unchurched people they know.

“In church life,” he adds, “relationships are so vital and very important. It’s all part of building a mission team and teamwork.”

Our Savior is about 10 minutes from



Instructor Maria Fernandez greets students taking part in Messiah Lutheran Church’s 2005 VBS program. An outreach effort of the Memphis congregation, the program is “totally, totally focused on the community,” explains Rev. Don Schmidt, pastor of Messiah. Fernandez, from Spain, is a member of Messiah’s Hispanic congregation and a teacher in the Memphis public schools.

DELIVERING SPACE & PLACE

A mission or a well-established congregation will both face a common challenge: when they plan to build—finding affordable property.

They are gaining assistance from Church Development Partners (CDP), an LCMS Recognized Service Organization that applies a business approach to land purchases—buying larger parcels, identifying the portion needed for ministry, and selling the excess land to developers willing to sell a portion of the property to the ministry at minimal cost.

CDP looks at property with “developer’s eyes” and actually buys the property. “We identify properties based on their potential for both ministry and development,” says Richard Brumfield, CDP president. “Then, by networking with like-minded developers, we negotiate the sale of land to benefit the mission as well as the developer. CDP takes no profit, keeping the final cost of land for the ministry as low as possible.”

In Chino Valley, Ariz., for example, CDP purchased 25 acres near a proposed housing development. “They were able to marshal more resources than we as a mission congregation would be able to do,” says Rev. Andrew



Standing on a 10-acre site that Church Development Partners located for Promise Lutheran Church, Murrieta, Calif., the fastest-growing city in the state, are, from left, James Beam, CDP founding president; Skip Hubby, Covenant Development; Rev. Chris Deknatel, pastor of Promise Lutheran Church; Rich Brumfield, CDP president; Merle Freitag, LCEF president; and Gerald Wendt, LCEF senior vice president. Funding came from a \$1 million gift from the Hubby family of Murrieta, plus a loan from the Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

Byars, pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Prescott, which is helping with the start. “Also they have expertise to deal with realtors, fire marshals, and city zoning boards that I or most laymen don’t have time or expertise to handle.”

In late July, CDP closed on 43 acres in League City, Texas. A portion of that property will become a second campus for Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Houston. Senior Pastor John Kieschnick says 8,000 new homes are projected within a three-mile radius of the new site, and Gloria Dei is working with the Texas District for a ministry plan. “We have a three- to five-year window here,” the pastor says. “I expect land to appreciate 10 to 20 percent a year.”

Currently involved in about 15 development projects, CDP also conducts feasibility studies of property and facilities and provides strategic facility planning. The organization has a core staff with experience in urban planning, architecture, property development, finance, and business. It also networks with volunteers and part-time associates of similar expertise throughout the country, fulfilling their objective to deliver space and place for ministry at the lowest possible cost.

Encouraged by Lutheran Church Extension Fund, CDP was formed in late 2000. The not-for-profit organization is based in Orange, Calif. (www.devpartners.org). The first president was James Beam, a real estate developer who had specialized in services for institutional, business, and nonprofit organizations. Rich Brumfield, AIA, succeeded Beam as president in April.

Manhattan and serves three communities, some changing ethnically. Herzberg says the small-group members seemed eager to speak with unchurched friends and propose ideas for outreach activities.

Herzberg also underscores another relationship—to world missions. Our Savior supports LCMS World Mission work in Kyrgyzstan and last year sent two members on short-term service projects with missionaries Tim and Rita Nickel. “The Holy Spirit is just really moving magnificently here,” he says. “We would like to send more. A mission trip expands and grows mission hearts.”

In Memphis, Tenn., Messiah Lutheran Church also piloted a first round of “Groups *Ablaze!*” Its neighborhood has changed over the last decade, and it already hosts an Hispanic congregation. Messiah also seeks to reach African-Americans and is beginning to hand out Bibles in the Urdu language to a growing Pakistani Muslim population.

“You look at the possibilities,” says Rev. Don Schmidt. “As long as you keep an eye on possibilities, you look at reaching people. With our traditional congregation, the focus has been on building relationships. It’s really about building friendships, and that’s where we see the groups as the key.”

Messiah added a contemporary worship service to reach “the 30-year-olds,” Schmidt continues. At the initiative of one group, food events are helping to introduce the congregation to the community.

From his vantage point, Scudieri is optimistic: “I think we are heading toward a golden age of mission. There’s a new spirit. People want to get on with the work,” he says. “In the next 10 years, we will have more money and more talent than we ever had before. People will look back and say, ‘Thank God for that time.’”



Roland Lovstad is a freelance writer and editor and member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Perryville, Mo.

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE THE LUTHERANS?

Though plateaued in America and declining in Europe, the Lutheran Church is flourishing in many other parts of the globe.

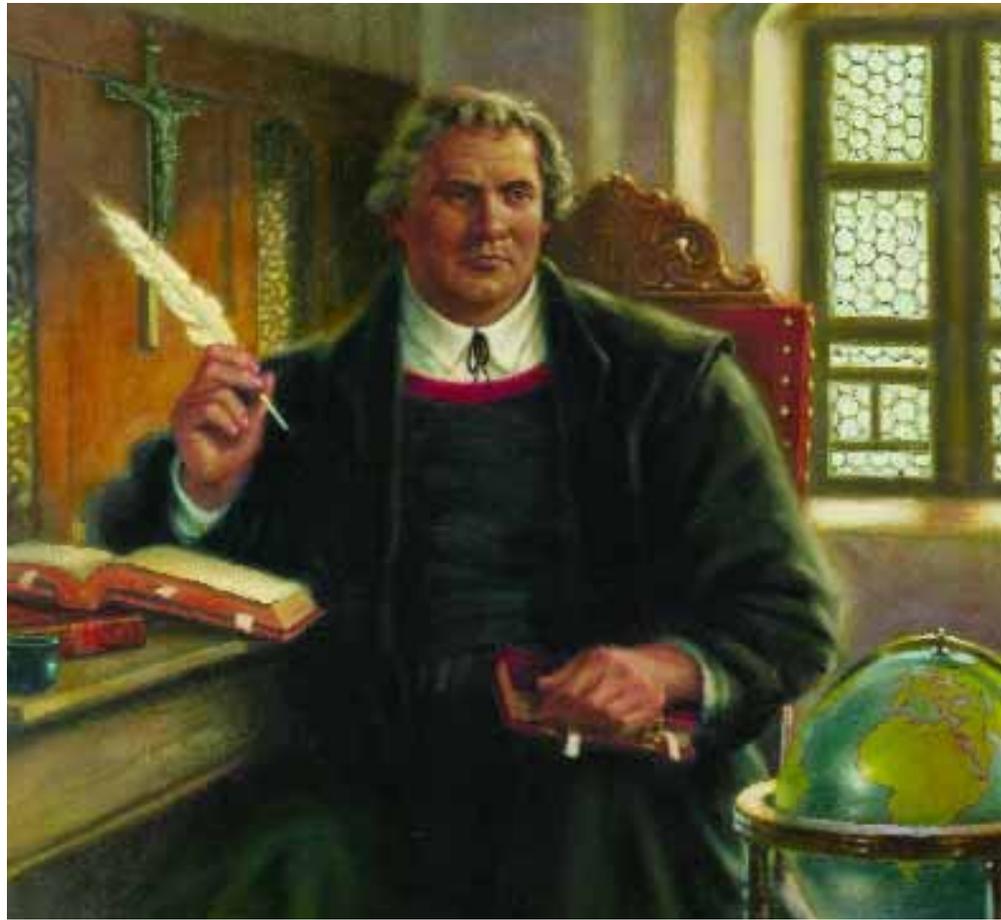
by Victor Raj

Several years ago, a software engineer moved from southern India to Fairfax, Va. In India, Prakash Karat and his family had been lifelong Lutherans. A computer firm in the United States had hired Karat and rented an apartment for his family.

Once settled in their new home, the Karats began a search for a Lutheran church. To their delight, they found one within walking distance. They attended a Sunday-morning worship service and received a warm welcome. After a profession of faith, the congregation accepted them into membership.

Weeks went by. The Karats noticed that their new faith family followed traditions and practices different from the ones in which they were brought up in India. They did not know there were varieties of Lutherans around the world.

Elvira and Karl Schneider from Tulsa, Okla., were on a three-month round-the-world tour in 2000. Near the halfway point, they found themselves one weekend in Baguio City,



the Philippines. For several weeks the couple had been missing traditional Lutheran-style worship. That Sunday morning they walked from their hotel to St. Stephen's Lutheran Church nearby. They were thrilled to hear a cappella music that resembled the music closest to their hearts, from page 15 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*. It was Communion Sunday at St. Stephens. With those who shared a common faith halfway around the world they ate and drank the body and blood of our Lord. In gratitude, they offered the pastor and his family a trip to the United States.

In the mid-1980s, I served as pas-

tor of Gospel Lutheran Church in Trivandrum, India. A youth from our congregation was accepted to a prestigious medical school far from home and any Lutheran church. He worshiped Sundays at an evangelical church. Whenever he came home for break, he said, "I miss our Lutheran liturgy and worship. I want to hear from the pastor's mouth 'given for you' and 'shed for you' as I receive Christ's body and blood."

Into all the world

Where in the world are Lutherans?

To a group of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, students on a visit to Germany, a local pastor said, "In the

city of Wittenberg and in East Berlin, only 18 percent of the people belong to any kind of Christian church. In some of the larger cities in Germany, there are more Muslims than Christians.”

Has Lutheranism become a stranger to its homeland? If so, then is this most pure and clear exposition of God’s undeserved favor for the whole world drawing to the foot of the cross people from other nations, languages, and cultures?

Those who have the gift of interpreting statistics say that today there are 6 million more Lutherans in Africa than in all of North America. The majority of today’s Lutherans do not speak German.

In 1706, 300 years ago next year, Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, a German Lutheran, sailed to India as a pioneer Protestant missionary. A pious, itinerant, and eclectic missionary, Ziegenbalg, who died young at 37, was sent by King Frederick IV of Denmark to Tranquebar, Denmark’s colonial foothold on the Indian subcontinent. Within five years of his arrival, he translated into Tamil, the local language, the New Testament and Luther’s Small Catechism. He also compiled a Tamil grammar; spoke up for human dignity; debated

Ziegenbalg preceded by 87 years “the father of modern Protestant missions,” William Carey of England, who reached Calcutta in 1793. Other adventures followed, including nine other Lutheran missions. Today, a million Indians are Lutherans, maintaining 10 different denominational identities.

Lutherans and Lutheran churches show up in extraordinary places, and in extraordinary ways. Next to China, India, and the United States, Indonesia is the fourth-most-populous country in the world. This collection of more than 7,000 islands is home to the largest number of Muslims in any one nation. At the same time, Indonesia is also the sixth most “Lutheran” country in the world. More than 5 million citizens of this country belong to 12 separate Lutheran synods, all of them members of the Lutheran World Federation. Indonesian Lutherans use Luther’s Small Catechism for Christian instruction and devoutly respect the Eucharist as something more than symbolic. Nevertheless, they are members of the Indonesian Communion of Churches, which

includes the Reformed and many Pentecostal groups. All of them ordain women.

The state of Indonesian Lutheranism is representative of Lutherans in other parts of the world. Darin Storkson, LCMS World Relief and Human Care director for Asia, points to three major reasons for such shallow Lutheran identity.

Pastors and church leaders do not receive adequate theological education to debate other prevailing theological positions. Lutheran seminaries do not exist,

leaving generic “Protestant” seminaries as the only option. Finally, the Indonesian government views all Christians as either Catholic or Protestant, which leaves no room for non-Catholics except to come together as a united front.

The Lutheran World Federation (of which the Missouri Synod is not a member) reports there are nearly 70 million Lutherans in the world today, almost half living in non-European countries. Although the oldest and largest Protestant church, its European and American membership has been fluctuating since World War I and declining since the 1990s. From Argentina to Papua New Guinea, and from Canada to Vietnam, Lutherans are scattered throughout the world. Membership in Lutheran church bodies varies from a few hundred to several million.

Maximizing mission opportunities globally

Founded in 1847, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is among the older strains of Lutheranism to put down roots in the United States. As throughout the nearly 160 years of its history, the LCMS continues to maximize every opportunity for mission. In the United States, the LCMS has pioneered ministry to the deaf and the blind and among African-Americans. Beginning with India in 1895, we have reached out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to 70 different countries.

In parts of the world today, doors



Worship Service—Lutherans in East Africa



religion with the local leadership; and established schools, orphanages, and a seminary for Indian pastors and teachers.

WHO ARE LUTHERANS?

We are saints and sinners who deem it a privilege to proclaim the love of God in Christ.

Young and old, rich and poor, woman or man, Lutherans believe they are at the same time saints and sinners. Sinners as they were born and live, and saints because of what God in Christ has done for them and for all who believe. As repentant and forgiven sinners, they live on the promises of God revealed in His written Word and brought to life in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Worship of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, gathers Lutherans together for prayers, praise, and thanksgiving. Public reading and proclamation of the Word is the centerpiece of Lutheran worship.

Lutherans are aware that God has given humans dominion over everything He has created. As responsible stewards of God's created order, they strive to excel in their vocation, maximizing the resources, gifts, and talents God has entrusted to them. They understand that ultimately God is the owner of everything they possess, given to them as a trust for service in His kingdom.



*Baptism—
Lutherans in India*

Lutherans understand that God has created humans, body and soul. In gratitude to the Creator, they care for the bodily needs of the person while preaching the salvation of souls. Through individual action and organized group efforts, they help the needy, provide for the underprivileged, and become a voice for the widow and the orphan. With prayer and patience, they endeavor to make faith active in love through works of mercy and healing.

Lutherans believe salvation is a gift from God. They have

received it freely, and freely must they share that gift with others. They deem it a privilege to proclaim the mighty acts of God to the ends of the earth. In every place they see a mission field, in their neighborhood, in the surrounding regions, and in distant lands. As God's own prized possession, they reach out to everyone with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:5).

Lutherans offer their whole life to God's will as a living sacrifice. For them to live is Christ and to die is gain. As temples of the Holy Spirit, they produce the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. They do so not as they ought but as they are able, empowered by the Spirit who lives in them.

Perhaps this is why Lutheranism is gaining in membership even in today's pluralistic world. Whether new immigrants coming to the United States, new converts in other parts of the world, or a neighbor down the street, the Lutheran interpretation of a Christian as a sinner and a saint, and the gift of distinguishing Law and Gospel, comfort all who embrace Lutheranism.



Church day center—Lutherans in Cambodia

for mission close quickly; in others, they open dramatically. The LCMS has career missionaries in 29 countries, nearly 100 long-term volunteer missionaries in 23 countries, and more than 100 educators deployed in six countries. Several humanitarian aid workers also serve the Synod.

Over the years most of our church's mission fields have grown to become our partners. The 30-member International Lutheran Council, established officially in 1993, is a global consortium of churches in partnership with the Missouri Synod.

The apostle John wrote of our Lord as the True Light, which enlightens everyone (John 1:9). By 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Synod, through its *Ablaze!* initiative, has determined to reach with that light no fewer than 100 million of those who still sit in spiritual darkness.

By word of mouth and by way of life, the people of the world will know that God loves them in spite of themselves, by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone revealed in Scripture alone.



Dr. Victor Raj is mission professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

— V.R.

THE MISSION FIELD ... AT HOME

A little Alaskan girl, three years old, has a daily routine when her daddy brings her to the Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center in Fairbanks. The first thing she wants to do is go into the adjacent sanctuary of Zion Lutheran Church, which operates the center.

"Before I go to school, I want to go see Jesus," she says.

There's a waiting list for Open Arms, a place where children "see Jesus." I had the privilege of seeing this ministry for myself when I visited Alaska this summer.

By some accounts, the United States is the third largest mission field in the world (behind China and India). I am constantly impressed by the zeal and creativity of so many people and congregations in our Synod who personify our stated mission "vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities, and the world."

One of the fastest-growing congregations in the Synod is housed in an old bagel factory. Most of the 400-plus members of Christ Assembly Lutheran Church on Staten Island, N.Y., are African immigrants. They and their pastor, Rev. Philip Saywayne, aren't simply adding to their numbers where they are, but have planted a dozen missions in several states—so that many more may hear of God's love in Jesus Christ!

In May, an "Igniting Congregations" event sponsored by my office brought together leaders from various specialized ministries, and each was awarded a grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. There I met

Pastor Eric Andrae and Bob Mates, representing the Pittsburgh (Pa.) Lutheran Center for the Blind, associated with First Trinity Lutheran Church there.

These men plan to use their grant to teach blind people to use a computer—sharing the Gospel in the process—and then provide their students with refurbished used computers (modified with a "screen reader" that verbalizes what's on the computer screen). These fellow Lutherans have figured out a way to reach people for Jesus who otherwise wouldn't be reached!

Meanwhile, back in Alaska, people living in some very remote villages—accessible only by small aircraft—are hearing the Gospel through Missouri Synod Lutherans who live in that vast state, as well as from Lutheran volunteers who travel there from the "lower 48."

Although there are only a dozen LCMS congregations in Alaska, ministry is being carried out in about 100 remote locations through staff of the Alaska Mission for Christ (AMC, a mission agency of the LCMS congregations in Alaska) and through properly supervised lay ministers. AMC also conducts more than 100 summer ministries such as Vacation Bible Schools and Bible classes with the help of about 1,000 volunteers.

In these and many other cases throughout our Synod, Lutheran Christians are working in the mission field right here at home. They are involved in the one mission to reach lost people, proclaiming the one message of Christ alone as Savior, and doing it as one people, united by God's love in Christ. They are part of the movement our Synod calls "*Ablaze!*" (whether they themselves call it that or not). And many more people will know the joy of forgiveness and the gift of eternal life as a result.

May God continue to bless their efforts, and may He bless you as well!

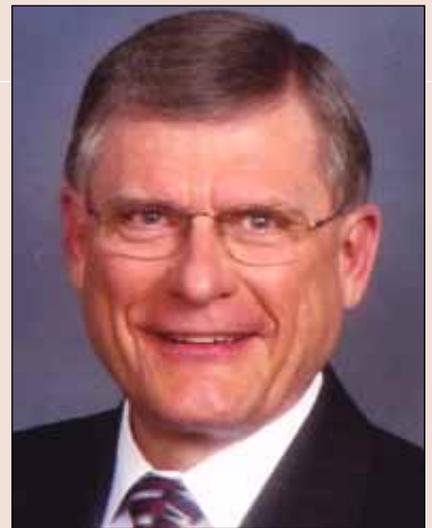
Jerry Kieschnick

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

John 3:16–17

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Synod President Gerald B. Kieschnick speaks to the congregation at Zion Lutheran Church, Fairbanks, Alaska, July 31 about the Ablaze! movement and challenges in Alaska and beyond for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.