



# THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

790

## Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

1 Praise to the Lord, the Al - might - y, the King of cre -  
2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things is won - drous - ly  
3 Praise to the Lord, who has fear - ful - ly, won - drous - ly,  
4 Praise to the Lord, who will pros - per your work and de -

your  
gle, up -  
d - less - ly  
mer - cy shall

LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK

VOL. 125

NO. 9

OCTOBER 2006

10

BLESSED

14

MOVING ROCKS  
IN INDONESIA

22

WHY THE  
REFORMATION?



## 4 HIS WORD—CAST IN SONG

by Paul Grime

## 10 BLESSED

by Paula Schlueter Ross

A number of factors—including spiritual and financial support from fellow LCMS Lutherans—enable a Sudanese woman to attend a synodical university.

## 14 MOVING ROCKS IN INDONESIA

by Anna Meyer

A parable of Jesus takes on a personal and powerful meaning for an LCMS volunteer working in Indonesia.

## 18 'WHAT SAY YOU, GOD?'

by Larry Reinhardt

CAUTION! You are about to enter the No-Spin Zone.

## 21 THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

by James Heine

Could an old standby coupled with a health savings account be right for you?

## 22 WHY THE REFORMATION?

by C.F.W. Walther

It is still all about the Word of Christ.



## TO THE READER

Another story about the new hymnal? Yes, with this issue, we conclude our coverage of the run-up to, and arrival of, *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*.

Few topics have commanded as much *Witness* ink in recent years as *LSB*, the fourth major English-language hymnal in the Synod's 158-year history.

And that, really, is the reason for all the ink. The advent of a new hymnbook

is a rare thing—a once-in-a-generation (or even a once-in-an-every-other-generation) event.

Many of our congregations already have dedicated and put their new hymnals to work. Others will soon. One debut of *LSB* of particular note occurred Sept. 14th in Milwaukee, where the more than 600 pastoral circuit counselors of the Synod, joined by their district presidents and a number of other LCMS officials, had gathered for a conference.

At an evening Eucharistic worship service at downtown Milwaukee's Trinity Lutheran Church, each man received a copy of *LSB* before entering the sanctuary. When the chords of the processional hymn sounded, the congregation rose, and the hearts and voices of some 700 seasoned LCMS churchmen boomed out *LSB* #837, "Lift High the Cross."

As you might imagine, it was an impressive scene.

*David L. Strand, Executive Director  
Board for Communication Services*

## DEPARTMENTS

2 LETTERS

9 LIFELINE

13 SEARCHING SCRIPTURE

24 NOTICES

26 FAMILY COUNSELOR

27 SHEDDING SOME LIGHT

29 FROM THE PRESIDENT

## COMING NEXT MONTH...

• Why We Care

• Spiritual Anxiety

• Early Childhood Education

• Jews and the Holy Land

## Intelligent Design

I commend Dr. Paul J. Zimmerman on his fine article, “By Design, Not by Accident” (July/August ‘06). He confirms what all Christians should instinctively know—that this magnificently diverse planet, populated by complex plants, animals, and people, simply could not have been the product of an accident. He gives us laymen an insight into the individual cell, which is far more complex than we could ever have imagined.

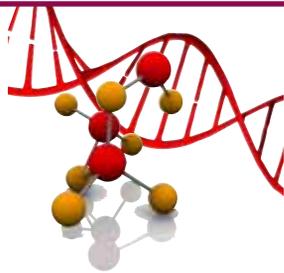
There is so much evidence of God’s creation that one hardly knows where to begin in explaining it all. The earth placed in orbit around the sun, which is never consumed, in just the right posi-

not visited some national park and been told by a park ranger, thoroughly indoctrinated in evolution, how this plant, animal, or particular geographic area evolved over so many millions of years?

We Christians believe in creation by faith alone, but the clear evidence of God’s creation is all around us if we will but open our eyes. I love that verse from the King James Version of the Bible: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1).

*Jack Pierce  
Charleston, Ill.*

I was pleased to see “By Design, Not by Accident” by my friend and former colleague at Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman.



“We Christians believe in creation by faith alone, but the clear evidence of God’s creation is all around us if we will but open our eyes.”

*Jack Pierce  
Charleston, Ill.*

tion in space so as to be not too hot or too cold. The precise tilting of the earth on its axis to usher in the glorious seasons of the year. An atmosphere with the exact proportion of the various gasses necessary to sustain the life of all plants and animals. The listing of God’s infinite, all-knowing plan as He created this world and the earth’s variety of inhabitants is incomprehensible for mere mortals.

This will offend some, I know, but I never will understand how a professing Christian can also accept the theory of evolution. Sadly, even our own government has embraced this flawed theory and teaches it as fact in our schools and universities. Who has

Over the years (44 years in the teaching ministry), when speaking at many schools, parishes, “winkels,” conferences, and other gatherings on our young, created earth, I have found a real hunger for good answers for the good questions our people of every age ask about the early earth. It is no secret that our seminaries and universities have provided little or no instruction or background on treating this very basic and important creation/evolution issue.

By the way, I like the new look of *The Lutheran Witness*. Ignore the critics who always emerge whenever there is even a welcome and wholesome change.

*Dr. Erich A. von Fange  
Adrian, Mich.*

*Dr. von Fange is the author of the just-published book, In Search of the Genesis World—Debunking the Evolution Myth (CPH).—Ed.*

## Poor little Pluto

Recently, thousands of scientists meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, decided that Pluto is no longer what it used to be. They declared it too shrimpy to qualify as a planet. Just like that, Pluto had been plumped by majority vote.

Suddenly, what all humanity had accepted as scientific fact for years—that Pluto was a planet—no longer obtained. It goes to show how science (1) can be wrong, and (2) can change its mind.

People should keep this capricious feature of science in mind when science serves up its brasher theories, such as evolution. We all need to become keener critics of much of what is touted as “scientific fact.”

*F.A. Hertwig  
Lincoln, Mo.*

## Cross my heart

The September “Q&A” column correctly stated that making the sign of the cross “is an excellent practice” recommended by Martin Luther in the Small Catechism.

The column might have added that one reason most Lutherans do not make the sign of the cross is that they don’t know how. In his *Conduct of the Service*, Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, who taught at our St. Louis seminary from 1951–73, described how, including in parentheses the words often associated with the various motions: “The Sign of the Holy Cross is a confessional gesture. It is made with the hand disposed as for a blessing from the head (‘My Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven’) to the breast (‘and was incarnate for me’) to the right side (‘and was crucified for me’) to the left side (‘and entered into my heart’).”

Perceptive readers will notice that unlike Roman Catholics, Lutherans use the older custom, also used by Eastern Orthodox Christians, of touching the right shoulder before the left one.

*Rev. Philip J. Secker, Director  
The Arthur Carl Piepkorn Center  
for Evangelical Catholicity  
Mansfield, Conn.*

Another reason most LCMS worshipers refrain from making the sign of the cross is that they don't see anyone else doing it. Although this certainly is a private matter, permit me to offer a few thoughts.

I am a lifelong LCMS member, and I always and unabashedly have made the sign of the cross when the name of the Triune God is invoked, when the benediction is recited, or when partaking of communion.

My congregation usually has almost 1,000 parishioners in attendance each weekend. As far as I can ascertain, only two other members have made the sign (one is now deceased and the other is a "sometimes" worshiper).

Although our pastors and vicars make the sign while invoking the name of the Triune God, and the order-of-service bulletin even prompts the laity by means of a printed "+" on the timing, members continue to shun the practice.

I think the general—and sadly flawed—reason for this is that people believe the gesture is too close to Roman Catholicism. The pastors and lay leaders of the Missouri Synod should put an end to this absurd thinking by sharing some well-chosen written and spoken remarks with their flocks.

*Richard H. Gerding  
Concord Village, Mo.*

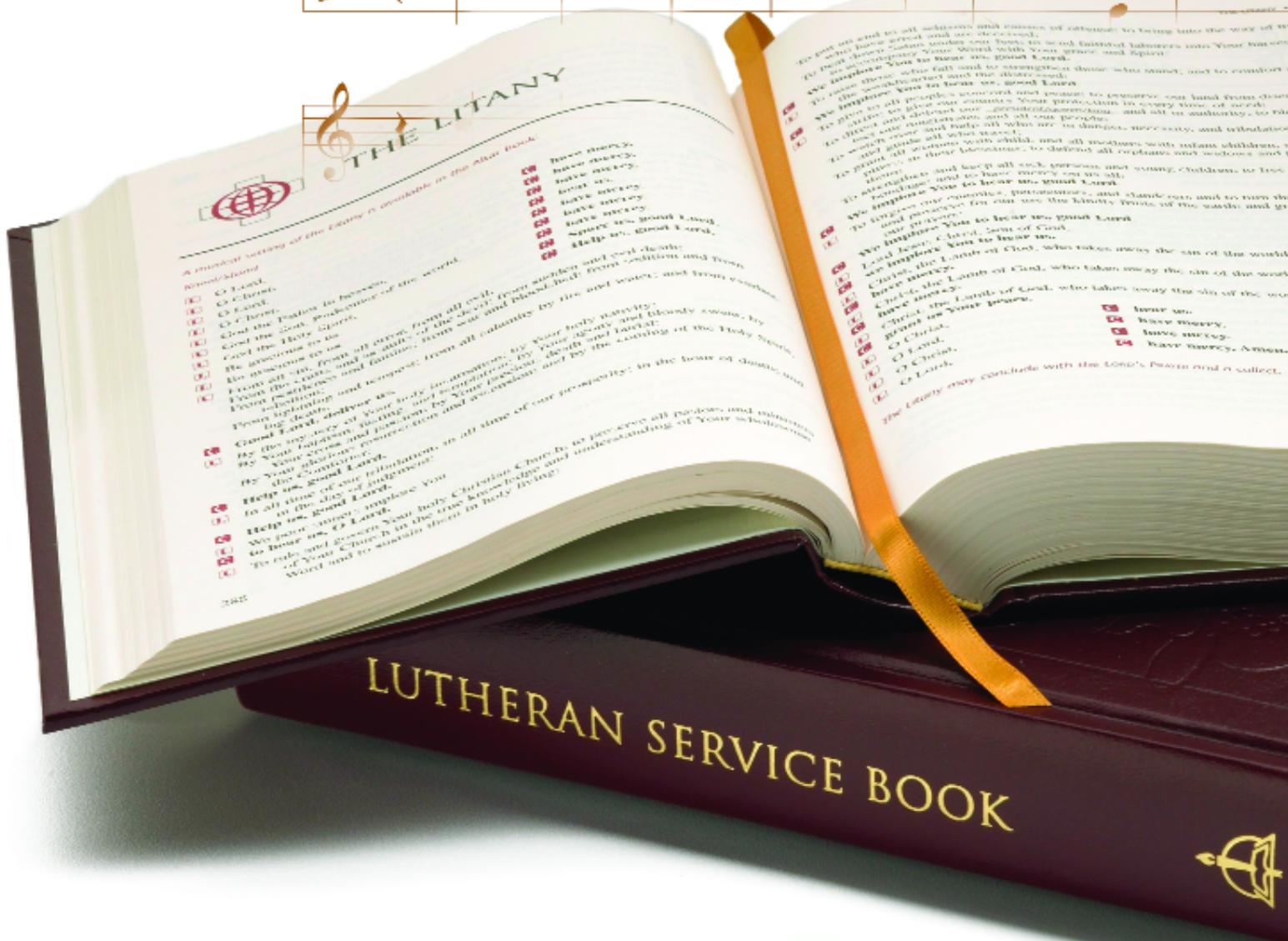
***We welcome letters that comment on articles in The Lutheran Witness. Send letters to The Lutheran Witness, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or e-mail them to [Lutheran.Witness@LCMS.org](mailto:Lutheran.Witness@LCMS.org).***

# His Word—Cast in Song

656

A Mighty Fortress Is Our

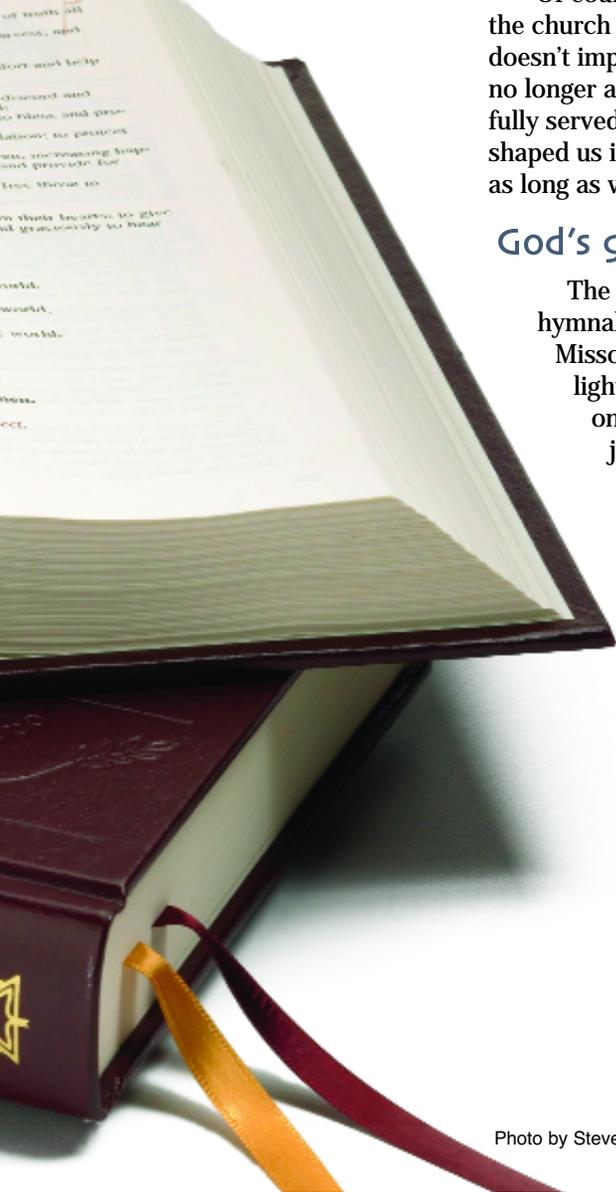
1 A might - y for - tress is our  
 2 With might of ours can naught be  
 3 Though dev - ils all the world should  
 4 The Word they still shall let re -



ur God



God,  
done,  
fill,  
main



by Paul Grime

## A new hymnal?

Perhaps you've asked yourself that question during the past few years when reading about *Lutheran Service Book*. For nearly eight years, the Commission on Worship has been at work together with its committees preparing a new hymnal and agenda for our Synod.

A new hymnal? For many of us, the bright blue book is still the new hymnal.

Well, *Lutheran Worship* was new at one time. And in comparison with *The Lutheran Hymnal* it seems relatively new. But *Lutheran Worship* has been with us now for almost 25 years. And *The Lutheran Hymnal* has been in use for 65 years.

So what's wrong with either of those hymnals? Aren't they still OK?

Of course they are. The decision of the church to prepare a new hymnal doesn't imply that earlier hymnals are no longer appropriate. They have faithfully served us for generations and have shaped us in ways that will be with us as long as we live.

## God's gifts to His Church

The decision to prepare a new hymnal for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was not made lightly. Nor did the Commission on Worship initiate the project just because it thought that a new hymnal would be a nice thing to have.

Most church bodies update their worship books from time to time. This can be for all kinds of reasons. Chief among them, however, is the fact that God raises up poets and composers in every age to craft new texts and melodies that carry the Word of God into our hearts and souls.

Even prior to Luther and the Reformation, there was a tradition of singing hymns in the language of the people. But the hymns were few, and the quality uneven. Through Martin Luther, God richly blessed His church not only with a man of keen theological insight and faithfulness, but one who also was a poet and musician. Luther's hymns were a wonderful gift to the church in his day, and even today, we can't imagine a hymnal without a significant number of his hymns.

A survey of church history quickly reveals how God has granted gifts to His church in every age. Imagine a hymnal without Paul Gerhardt's "Now Rest Beneath Night's Shadow" (*LSB* 880), or Johann Heermann's "O Dearest Jesus" (439), or such treasures as "My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" (575), or "Silent Night" (363), a hymn that didn't appear in an LCMS hymnal until 1941. Considering more recent gifts, where would we be without Martin Franzmann's classic "Thy Strong Word" (578) or a new favorite like "Christ Be My Leader" (861)?

The truth is, no hymnal is ever completely new. Instead, it brings hundreds of hymn texts and tunes from earlier hymnals that have nourished the faithful for centuries. To these rich gifts from the past are added the best from our current time so that God's people may be fed by His Word cast in song.

## Discover the treasures

So what treasures does *Lutheran Service Book* contain that would compel a congregation to use it? First, consider the services.

There is much in the new hymnal that will be very familiar to you. That's intentional. When you pick up *LSB* to use it for the first time, you will find at least one service that you recognize from our earlier hymnals. There may be minor changes in the service, but on the whole, it will be very familiar.

A new service in *LSB* is the "Service of Prayer and Preaching." In some ways

# LSB

## Into Hearts and Homes

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Col. 3:16



Masterfile

Throughout the centuries, Lutheran Christians have used a variety of printed resources in order to “let the word of Christ dwell in [them] richly” on a day-to-day basis. From early collections of Luther’s sermons to our modern *Portals of Prayer*, the diversity is astounding and the theological richness staggering.

But through all of this, there have been three books that have served as the constant companions of Lutherans in the Word and at prayer: the Bible, Luther’s Small Catechism, and, yes, the hymnal. For just as the Bible is the very written Word of God, and the catechism a faithful “roadmap” to the Holy Scriptures, so also does the hymnal faithfully confess God’s Word ... “on the wings of song.”

As one writer put it: “[Luther took the hymn] out of liturgies and put it into people’s hearts and homes, that when they had learned it and loved it, they might bring it to the church and sing it together” (James R. Sydner, *The Hymn and Congregational Singing*).

***Lutheran Service Book*** provides a number of resources for you and your family to daily spend time in God’s Word and to pray on the basis of that Word.

**“Daily Prayer for Individuals and Families”** (Pages 294–298) provides brief orders of service for home devotions at four times of day (morning, noon, early evening, and close of the day). Suggestions of how to pray regularly “for others and ourselves” according to the day of the week are also provided.

**“Daily Lectionary”** (Pages 299–304) provides two readings from the Bible for each day of the year. As a whole, the readings cover approximately one-third of the Old Testament and nearly all of the New Testament each year.

**“Prayers, Intercessions, and Thanksgivings”** (Pages 305–318) offer nearly 100 written prayers on a variety of topics. A helpful topical outline at the beginning will guide you as to where to find specific prayers for individual needs.

**“The Psalms and Table of Psalms for Daily Prayer”** (Page 304). *LSB* contains 107 psalms (more than any previous LCMS hymnal). These psalms from Holy Scripture provide a rich vocabulary for individual prayer and devotion through every twist and turn of life.

The Small Catechism urges “the head of the family [to] teach it in a simple way to his household.” The catechism’s wonderful summary of Christian doctrine can be used to enrich family devotions day after day. Luther’s **“Christian Questions with Their Answers”** is ideal for Saturday nights, in preparation for receiving the Lord’s Supper the next morning.

The hymns themselves provide a wealth of prayer and praise resources, whether sung or spoken. These are the songs that faithful Christians will remember their whole life long, even when other memories may leave them in old age.

From cradle to grave, the church’s song proclaims the Gospel into our hearts as well as our praise and thanksgiving for all of Christ’s benefits. *Lutheran Service Book* will be a valuable tool to assist you in “singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

— Rev. Jon D. Vieker  
Assistant Director  
Commission on Worship

this service resembles the old catechism services that were once used to teach children the faith. The service is primarily spoken. An Old Testament Canticle provides a new musical setting of the First Song of Isaiah (Isaiah 12). A New Testament Canticle, which concludes the service, is based on baptismal texts from 1 Corinthians and Romans. Both of these musical settings have refrains that make them easy to learn.

Four occasional services included in *Lutheran Service Book* are Holy Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, and the Funeral Service. They provide opportunities for congregational participation and for learning about these important events in the life of every Christian.

## Familiar favorites

With 636 hymns, canticles, and responses, *Lutheran Service Book* offers more choices than any single congregation could ever digest. There are literally hundreds of hymns with which you will be quite familiar. From beloved Christmas carols to those joyous hymns of the resurrection that we sing every Easter, the hymns in *LSB* give voice both to the joys and the heartfelt longings of every Christian.

You will quickly recognize some favorite hymn texts that have been restored. For example, rather than using updated language, hymns like “My Faith Looks Up to Thee” (702) and “We Give Thee But Thine Own”

You will quickly recognize some favorite hymn texts that have been restored.



(781) appear the way we have sung them for generations. Likewise, beloved tunes for hymns like “God Loved the World So That He Gave” and “The Day of Resurrection” have also been restored.

## New hymns, new ideas

Among the new hymns in *Lutheran Service Book* are many that are based on a specific passage from Scripture. Quite often these hymns nicely complement the appointed readings for a given Sunday. For example, the hymn “O Christ, Who Shared Our Mortal Life” (552) focuses on the resurrection miracles of Jesus. It’s actually three hymns in one, allowing the congregation to sing the appropriate stanzas depending on the Gospel reading for the day. (See the sidebar for more examples.)

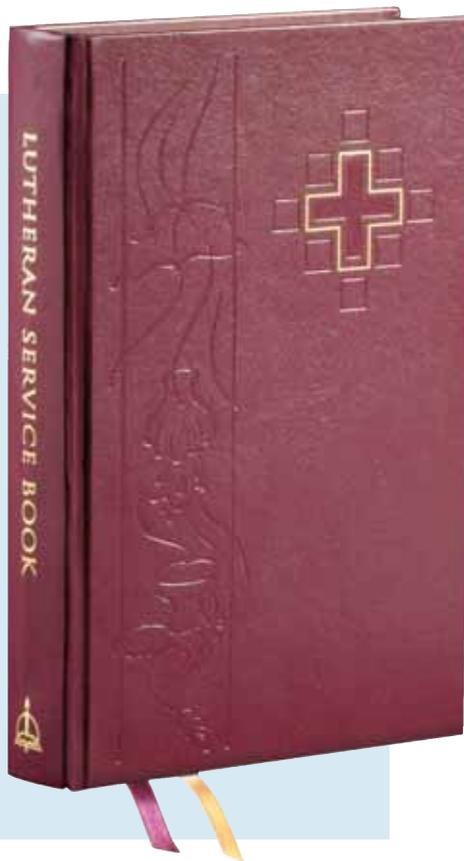
## New technologies

Computer technology certainly helped the behind-the-scenes work of preparing and editing the hymnal. But an even greater impact will be felt with another *LSB* resource called *Lutheran Service Builder*—an electronic version of the hymnal.

All of the texts and music of the services and hymns are included. More important, it’s a powerful worship-planning tool for pastors, musicians, and secretaries to plan services and create bulletins. In addition, the *Builder* will keep track of when a particular hymn was last sung. It can export a service to PowerPoint, and, with the click of a button, export the text of the entire service to your word processor in a large-print edition.

## Still a book

Despite these uses of technology, this hymnal is printed in low-tech book form. For all of the technological advances of our age, there still is value in collecting the church’s treasures of word and song into a book that you can hold and read. Unlike printed bulletins or services projected on a screen—which are useful and certainly have their place—the hymnal exudes a sense of permanence. Many of the texts it contains have stood the test of time. Their relevance is determined not by how well they reflect the spirit of our age but by the way they give voice to “the prayer, praise, and thanksgiving of



God’s holy people,” to quote from the introduction to *LSB*.

How will *Lutheran Service Book* be viewed in the coming years? There will undoubtedly be a variety of responses to that question. It is my prayer that chief among them will be the recognition that this hymnal sings of Christ and all His benefits. Whatever its other strengths and weaknesses, *Lutheran Service Book* faithfully confesses Christ as Lord and Savior and gives us fitting words to offer Him our praise and thanksgiving.

---

Dr. Paul Grime is the executive director of the LCMS Commission on Worship.

# Word and Song

Many new hymns in *Lutheran Service Book* are based on a specific reading from the Bible. Here are several examples:

- 424 O Christ, You Walked the Road**  
Matthew 4:1–11 (Jesus’ temptation);
- 540 Christ, the Word of God Incarnate**  
The Gospel of John (Jesus’ “I am” sayings);
- 541 “Away from Us!” the Demon Cried**  
Mark 1:23–26 (Jesus’ casting out of demons);
- 691 Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing**  
Galatians 5:22–23 (The fruit of the Spirit);
- 787 The Temple Rang with Golden Coins**  
Mark 2:41–44 (The widow’s mite);
- 856 O Christ, Who Called the Twelve**  
Matthew 10:1–42 (Calling of the disciples).

Great care has been devoted to the thousands of details in *Lutheran Service Book*. For example, how many times have you accidentally turned to a hymn rather than to a page number? That won’t be possible in *LSB* because there is only one set of numbers used through the entire book. The first 150 numbers are the psalms. The services begin on Page 151. The last page of services and other worship resources is Page 330. The first hymn that follows, “The Advent of Our King,” is number 331. No longer will visitors—or even you—struggle to find their way through the hymnal.



*A number of factors—including spiritual and financial support from fellow LCMS Lutherans—enable a Sudanese woman to attend a synodical university.*

by Paula Schlueter Ross

**N**ineteen-year-old Towaan Deng is the first in her family to attend a four-year university—a private one, nonetheless.

One of her nine siblings—whose ages range from 6 to 28—graduated from technical school earlier this year. But Towaan, a “middle child,” knows how blessed she is.

Chatting on a cell phone while walking across the campus of Concordia University Nebraska, Seward, Towaan says it was the only school to which she applied.

As a Lutheran, she “wanted to be around the same kind of people,” she said, which just “makes life easier.” Towaan is majoring in graphic design and says her classes are interesting, the teachers, good. She attends Lutheran worship services each Sunday in the campus chapel—something she might not be able to do at a state school.

Her family is not wealthy, but Towaan has received a federal grant, a need-based scholarship, and funding from her home congregation, making her dream of attending Concordia a reality.

All in all, she says she’s glad she chose Concordia, Seward.

“The environment is good, the weather is nice. It’s quiet, so you can concentrate on school,” she said. “The people are friendly and helpful—students, teachers, everybody.”

The only drawback is that she misses her big family back in Georgia, but she’s confident she’ll eventually “get over it.” Her oldest sister, Nyok, lives in Lincoln, Neb., about a half-hour’s drive from campus, so that’s some consolation, she says.

Towaan’s family, headed by parents Bafel Paul Deng and Rebecca Tong Duwag, arrived in the United States

in 1998 from Sudan, East Africa. Lifelong Christians, but not Lutheran, they joined Peace Lutheran Church in Decatur, Ga., “because of the doctrine and the faith,” according to Bafel, today a Sudanese human-care worker and vicar who works with Peace and the Sudanese Evangelical Lutheran Church. That doctrine, he explains, “is very clear.”

“I’m happy to be with [the] Lutheran church,” he says.

The elder Deng also is happy his daughter is attending a Lutheran university—especially since this is her first extended stay away from home.

“Since she is at a Lutheran university, I feel good because the chapel is there,” he said. “She will continue going to church.”

That’s good news to Dr. Victor J. Belton as well. As pastor of the Peace congregation, where all 10 Deng children were confirmed, Belton encouraged Towaan to attend a Lutheran university.

That wasn’t always his practice, admits Belton, a graduate of Concordia University, Bronxville, N.Y. But, as a result of his service on the Synod’s Board of Directors, Belton says he is now more aware of the many resources, or “blessings,” his church body has to offer its members.

Those blessings include the Synod-owned Concordia University System (CUS), with schools in—besides Seward, Neb., and Bronxville, N.Y.—Ann Arbor, Mich.; Austin, Texas; Irvine, Calif.; Mequon, Wis.; Portland, Ore.; River Forest, Ill.; St. Paul, Minn.; and Selma, Ala.

“We do not simply have access to some colleges and universities,” Belton said. “We own—*own*—10 colleges and universities that are listed regularly in *U.S. News & World Report* as being among the best institutions in the nation.”

Concordia, Selma, in fact, is the world’s only historically Black Lutheran college, he noted.

He “always knew the Concordias existed,” Belton said, but wasn’t as knowledgeable about their operations “and how important it is that congregations support them” until he joined the Synod’s Board of Directors,

which has authority over certain property and financial matters for the schools.

Today, he says, he considers “more readily the resources of our Synod and how they may well fit into the lives of those we serve.”

Belton urges congregations, schools, and other LCMS entities to display prominently posters and fliers promoting Concordia universities, distribute CUS bulletin inserts to worshipers, and encourage teenagers to check out CUS schools and to consider careers as pastors, teachers, and other professional church workers.

Then, when a student says “yes” to a Lutheran college or university, congregation members must be sure to support that student both spiritually and financially,

Belton says.

“We live lifestyles that those who began our Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod could not even imagine,” he said. “Our refrigerators are full, but our parents worked the land for their support and sometimes had barely enough to survive. But they still gave generously” to their congregations and schools.

“Are you prepared to hear the challenge that lies before us, dear saints of God, as we go forward in this time of abundance and affluence?” Belton asks. “What are we willing to do for those young people who will approach their pastors in the years to come with the desire to serve, but without the resources to do it?”

Dr. Kurt Krueger, executive director of the

Synod’s Board for University Education, believes the Concordias are well within the reach of every qualified Lutheran student, and that they offer students a better education, in many ways, than a large public university.

Classes are smaller at a CUS school—typically about two dozen students—allowing for more individual attention, according to Krueger. “It’s impossible to remain anonymous at a Concordia,” he said.

Instructors also are full professors, not teaching assistants, he added, and “are encouraged to relate their faith to the subject at hand.”

A 2004 survey conducted by the Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA)



Rev. Victor Belton helps out at a carwash at Peace Lutheran Church, Decatur Ga., on Saturday, Sept. 9. The fundraising event was to help the junior youth attend the Southeastern District’s youth gathering in Orlando in November. Belton, a member of the Synod’s Board of Directors, encourages Lutheran teenagers to consider the Concordia schools and careers as professional church workers.



Towaan Deng enjoys a moment between classes with her roommate, Katie Wollman, from Baltimore, Md., also a freshman at Concordia Nebraska.

found that 74 percent of Lutheran college graduates said they “benefited from opportunities for spiritual development” at their schools (compared to 22 percent of public university graduates), and 74 percent said their schools “helped them develop a sense of purpose in life” (compared to 55 percent from public schools).

Concordia students also have more opportunities to develop leadership skills and to take part in extracurricular activities, like theater and sports, because of the smaller student body.

Krueger says most of the Concordias are “doing

very well financially” and “have been able to add high-quality faculty and to provide new facilities and state-of-the-art technology for our students.”

He is always amazed, he said, “at the number of Lutherans who do not know about our schools, or who still think that our schools are only for training church workers.”

In fact, the CUS schools offer a wide variety of majors, including business and marketing, communications and journalism, computers, education, health professions, science, and visual and performing arts, as well as training for church careers such as deaconess and directors of family life, Christian education, Christian outreach, and parish music.

“Our schools exist to train Christian leaders for the church and for society,” Krueger says.

For more information about Concordia University System schools, visit the Synod’s Web site at [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org) (click on “Directories,” then “Seminaries and Universities”) or contact Krueger at (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1250, or [kurt.krueger@lcms.org](mailto:kurt.krueger@lcms.org).

For information about all Lutheran colleges and universities or to see more results of the LECNA survey, visit [www.lutherancolleges.org](http://www.lutherancolleges.org).

-----  
Paula Schlueter Ross is contributing editor for *The Lutheran Witness*. Her e-mail is [paula.ross@lcms.org](mailto:paula.ross@lcms.org).

# Why Do We Suffer?

by Jeff Hansen

**W**hile reading through my old hymnal, I came across a hymn that referenced Lamentations 3. This reference seemed out of place, so I opened my Bible and read this chapter.

The first 20 verses describe how it feels to suffer. Many of us can relate to its graphic description. However, the tone completely changes with the next verse. “Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail.”

This is Gospel! Those first 20 verses are a foreshadowing of Christ’s suffering and dying on the cross for our salvation! Additional words of comfort follow: “Though He brings grief, He

will show compassion, so great is His unfailing love. For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men. The Lord is good to

those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him.”

Lamentations 3 teaches that although we suffer at times, by enduring it and trusting in the Lord, He will guide us through those difficult times. Read Job 36 for more inspired words of comfort.

1 Corinthians 10 also assures us that “God is faithful; He will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tested, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” Read the entire chapter. It assures us that God has everything under control. Now that is comforting!

That hymn referencing Lamentations 3 was “Go To Dark Gethsemane.” At the close of the second verse, it states, “Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; learn of Him to bear the cross.” Christ experienced a great deal of suffering, even death, in order to carry out the great plan of salvation for us. Although we will never fully understand God’s plans for us, through Him we endure any hardships that come our way.

Martin Luther wrote, “Affliction is the best book in my library,” meaning that suffering can often be the best teacher.

It’s healthy to search for positives to come from our suffering. Here are some things to help:

- Suffering makes us thankful for what we already have. God’s will for us in Christ Jesus is to give thanks in all circumstances. Read 1 Thessalonians 5.

- Suffering humbles us by showing we’re not in control of everything. The Bible mentions many times that God exalts the humble.

Martin Luther even points out that, “God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.” This reminds us of Job and his eventual redemption.

- Suffering helps us witness to and comfort others—especially those who suffer from afflictions similar to what we’ve endured.

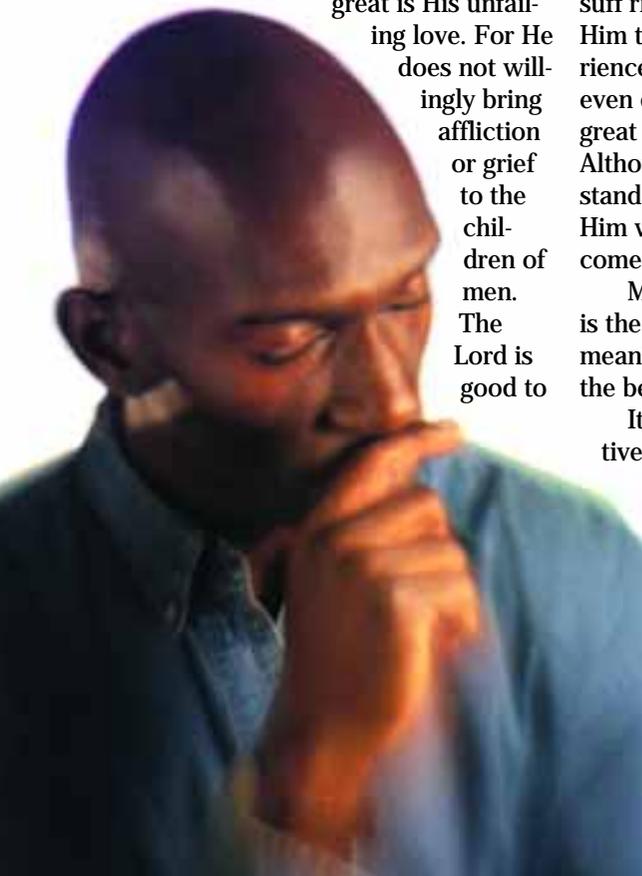
This is beautifully expressed in 2 Cor. 1:3–11. Read particularly verse 5: “For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.”

- Suffering brings us closer to God. Read 1 Peter 1 and James 1. Peter reminds us, “Though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, these have come so that your faith . . . may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” And James states, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

Our Heavenly Father often does His work through those who suffer. He strengthens and shapes us in our faith to be more useful to Him through our afflictions. By bearing our crosses, we become better servants to the Lord. Christ bore the heaviest cross of all, and through Him we bear ours.

Additional reading: Rom. 5:1–5; Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor. 12:7–10; 1 Peter 5:6–11.

-----  
Jeff Hansen, a three-time cancer survivor, is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Billings, Mont.



# Moving Rocks in Indonesia

*A parable of Jesus takes on a personal and powerful meaning for an LCMS volunteer working in Indonesia.*

by Anna Meyer

I remember saying to God, “God, this is ridiculously out of my comfort zone!”

But the next nine days would prove again and again that His grace and strength were sufficient and evident in my weaknesses.

Many smiles—shy, friendly, amused—met my own smile—sincere yet nervous. I gazed out the back of the *labi-labi*, a small covered truck. I was riding down the streets of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, hardly believing it was all real. Beside me in the *labi-labi* were a few familiar faces, but past that, out the windows were faces, clothing, and structures that were completely strange to me.

Now, you may be wondering, “Where in the world is this Banda Aceh?” Good question. In fact, I asked that very question just a few months ago. As a mission-

ary and English teacher in Taiwan, I was thankful for a three-week break beginning in January for the Chinese New Year. This was a welcomed rest from the regular daily schedule, as well as an amazing opportunity to travel. I only had to choose where.

My Chinese-language teacher had the answer, “Banda Aceh. Indonesia needs volunteer help. You should go there.”

This being all the information I had on the matter, I went to the Internet to learn where Indonesia was, let alone the city of Banda Aceh. Thousands of islands make up the vast stretch of many different people and languages that together are the nation of Indonesia. Banda Aceh is the capital city of Indonesia’s westernmost province, Aceh. On Dec. 26, 2004, the infamous tsunami decimated this area, hitting the city without



Cassie Thomas (left) and author Anna Meyer take a ride in the sidecar of one of the motorcycles that LCMS World Relief/Human Care purchased for lease by people to earn a living. Thomas is an LCMS volunteer English teacher from Macau, China,





Were there rocks blocking seeds from being sown?

Were there rocks in peoples' hearts?

Were there rocks in *my* heart?

Moving rocks was the task God had brought us to do.

warning. Many Asian countries were affected that day, but Aceh was the first and the most devastatingly hit area. Around 90,000 people—a third of the city's population!—were lost, with the death toll reaching to 160,000 for all of Indonesia.

As you may imagine, a year later, though there has been some significant recovery, the city and the survivors are still left reeling in the loss and destruction. Hundreds still live in refugee tent camps, while parts of Aceh remain flattened, littered with debris—testimony to the businesses and lives that once existed there.



I learned some of these facts about the area and got in contact with Dennis Denow, the LCMS worker and volunteer coordinator in Indonesia. Next, God helped me work through some significant fear issues and provided travel companions. I wished my friends and co-workers in Taiwan a Happy New Year and headed overseas.



Above: A resident motions toward the sea from where the tsunami rolled in on Dec. 26, 2004, destroying the city of Banda Aceh and killing more than one-third of its population.

Left: Local women do the family laundry in their "Tent City." Residents were expecting to live here for six months. It was more than a year after the tsunami when these pictures were taken.

Top photo: istockphoto. Stone photos: PhotoDisc

The group of fellow nine-day volunteers that the Lord had provided were Nikki Baldwin and Zinnie Wong from Taiwan, and Chris Strom and Cassie Thomas from Macau. Also arriving the same day to Banda Aceh were two six-month volunteers, Ray and Dottie Huebschman from Nebraska.

Heading to Aceh, our small group really didn't know what to expect, but we were excited. Some ideas about working in the city's 19 junior high schools had been suggested, but the key words shared with us time and time again were, "Be flexible!"

We quickly oriented to our surroundings and gained more information about how we would be helping in the schools. One evening, Dennis led our group in a helpful study of the Parable of the Sower. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells how a farmer goes out and sows seeds in various types of soil, producing various results. Following this analogy, Dennis asked us to think about what might need to happen before seeds can be planted. He asked us to think about Aceh. Were there rocks blocking seeds from being sown? Were there rocks in peoples' hearts? Were there rocks in *my* heart? Dennis explained that moving rocks was the task before us. Moving rocks was the task we believed God had brought us to do.

Moving rocks was the task that we were there to do only because God had already been moving rocks and planting seeds in our own hearts!

Low Belcourt, a leader in the organization that hosted us in Banda Aceh, commented that, "In Aceh, we are there to love hurting people through acts of service, trusting that hearts are being softened for people who will use words."

We were quite possibly the first Christians with whom many of the teachers and students had ever had direct contact. What were their concepts about Christians? Did they see us as frightening and offensive,

and so also our beliefs? What were my concepts about Muslims? Did I see them as dangerous and cruel? Maybe these misconceptions and false assumptions were some of the rocks that God can move.

One important way in which God works to move rocks is through one-on-one relationship building. This was much of what we did in our short time in Banda Aceh, and it is much of what can still be done there. Meeting and talking with the junior high school teachers and students, attending weddings and funerals with them, and visiting their homes and families gave amazing opportunity to develop new friendships and to see some rocks budge.



Moving rocks was the task that we were there to do only because God had already been moving rocks and planting seeds in our own hearts!

The first night in Aceh, our group had a short meeting with the junior high school supervisor. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to work with him and to help be a part of their recovering school system. We asked him many questions. One question I asked stemmed from my observation that most of the women in Banda Aceh wore headscarves. I asked if it would be good for us to also cover our heads as we taught.

"We know who you are, so we understand if you do not wear a headscarf. But yes, it would be better to wear one."

So the women in our group wore headscarves every day. The coverings felt hot and somewhat awkward at first, but I think it was well worth it. I noticed that the co-teachers seemed to be at ease with me and kept commenting about my scarf and how "sweet" it looked.

It was a source of conversation and relationship building as one teacher asked, "Are you Muslim?"

That gave me the opportunity to share the fact, "No, I'm Christian."

One girl commented about my scarf, "That is good. It shows you respect us."

One day, a co-teacher took me to lunch. In the car, I listened to his descriptions of the post-tsunami mess and his experiences with it all. Then the conversation turned to the popular topic of how I should find an Aceh boyfriend and stay in Aceh a long time. Suddenly, though I do not remember quite how, it came up that I was a Christian. The teacher turned and gave me a rather intense look. "You and I are different," he said.

"Yup," I agreed.

He continued, "But we will not talk about our

The author, Anna Meyer (second from left), and other short-term LCMS volunteers taught English language students at a junior high school.



Photo courtesy Anna Meyer

differences. We will talk about our similarities. We want to help people. You want to help us. You are here to help people.”

“That’s right,” I agreed again.

He nodded his head very decidedly at this, and the conversation turned back to other things. But I was glad for that brief exchange. Both the acknowledgement of differences and the acknowledgement of similarities are examples of rocks being slowly moved away from the heart’s soil. I pray that we Christians may be labeled as “different” from the world. At the same time, realizing our sameness as people in need of help is a big step.

Many of you are aware of the present initiative called *Ablaze!* Our church body, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, along with our overseas partner churches, has set a goal of sharing God’s love with 100 million unreached people by 2017. Sometimes I think it’s funny to have a special name or number set for what we are called to do as we go about the work He gives us. But I also like that we are making a conscious effort to be more intentional and aware of opportunities to share God’s love!

In Aceh, we can be aware of new and exciting opportunities to reach people. Prior to the tsunami, Banda Aceh had been a place of civil unrest. That, paired with the fact that it is a very conservative Muslim province, made it a difficult place for most outsiders to reach. Now, however, Aceh is offering opportunities and invitations, particularly from the educational system.

Spending a few days building one-on-one relationships, helping teachers practice their English, teaching some classes, visiting peoples’ homes, and being a friend or a set of listening ears are accessible opportunities for young and old right now. At present, maybe we can reach people simply through loving actions, and God shining through our lives.

Spending those days in Indonesia was one of the best experiences of my life. As I left, tears rolled down my face, as well as the faces of those we had met and could now call friends. How I wish I could introduce you to all of the dear teachers, students, and the brothers and sisters working in Aceh. How I wish I could share more. May we all be encouraged that we have a living and loving God. May God shine that fact through us in all that we do.

---

Anna Meyer is a mission volunteer serving in Taiwan.

Stone photos: PhotoDisc

## LCMS Moving Rocks

Here is some of the work that has been done by LCMS World Relief/Human Care in Indonesia since the Tsunami:

- Instituted a rent-to-own program for tsunami victims to have a motorcycle and sidecar;
- Helped build 30 new houses for tsunami victims;
- Helped build two community centers through which LCMS World Relief/Human Care can provide community development projects and programs;
- Provided teacher training for junior high school teachers;
- Purchased and delivered some 25,000 textbooks to four junior high schools.



LCMS World Relief/Human Care purchased motorcycles and sidecars for lease by the Indonesian people to help them earn a living.

## Opportunities for You to Move Rocks



Where might you serve as a volunteer with our Synod? There are many opportunities to witness your faith and show Christ’s love for all the world through building one-on-one relationships.

For information about volunteering, visit [www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=1904](http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=1904)

**Short-term volunteers** (one to six weeks) are needed to:

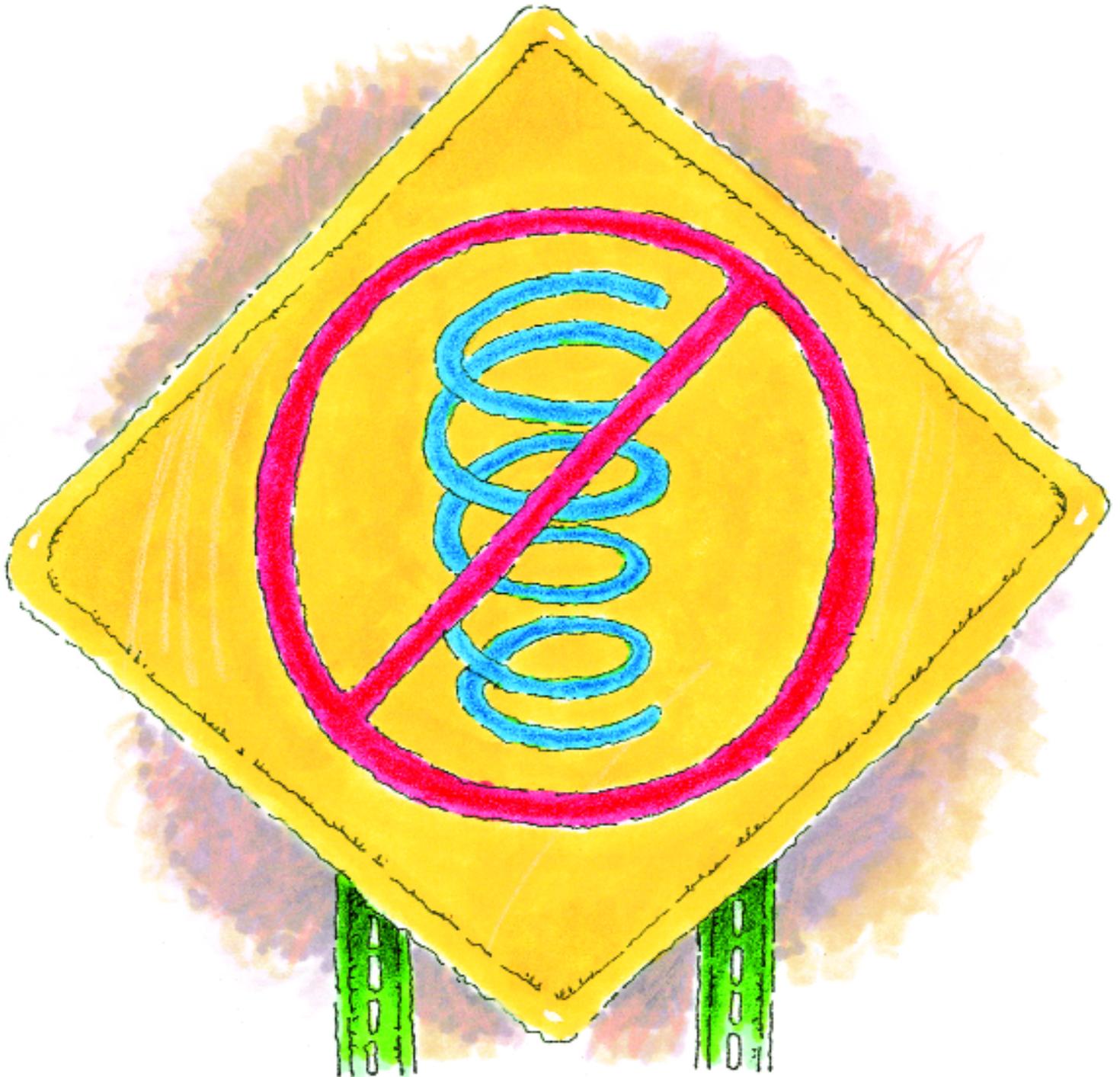
- Conduct sports clinics;
- Teach English as a foreign language;
- Conduct workshops for junior high school math and science teachers;
- Conduct community workshops for computers, embroidery, basic accounting, and many other fields.

**Long-term volunteers** (six months to two years) are needed to:

- Teach English;
- Train math and science teachers.

# 'What Say You, God?'

**CAUTION!**  
**YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER**  
**THE [STEWARDSHIP] NO-SPIN ZONE.**



by Larry Reinhardt

These are the words that Bill O'Reilly uses to open his Fox News Network show, "The Factor." They are intended to give you the impression that what you are about to see and hear is an unvarnished, fair and balanced picture of reality without any "spinning" of the truth.

Caution! The article you are about to read takes you into the *stewardship* "no-spin zone." It will give you a fair and balanced picture of Christian stewardship based on the truth of God's Word, where we learn about the heart and soul of Christian stewardship.

When people hear the word "stewardship," their reactions are mixed.

Some say, "Oh no, here they come for my money again."

Others say, "Now they are going to make me feel guilty because I don't give enough money or time to the church."

Still others, "I'll be glad when they get this stewardship business completed so we can go back to doing

what we always do in the church."

These reactions don't sound like stewardship is a "free and joyous activity." But that is exactly how we in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have defined stewardship: "Christian stewardship is the free and joyous activity of the child of God and God's family, the church, in managing all of life and life's resources for God's purposes."

Christian stewardship—free and joyous? Many might argue that it is anything but free and joyous. Yet many of God's stewards do find great joy in giving generously of their time, talents, and money for the support of God's work among us.

The 1998 Synod Convention approved eight Biblical Stewardship Principles as guidelines for all LCMS stewardship-education and fundraising activities. The eight principles have done a good job of capturing the basics of what the Bible teaches about Christian stewardship.

Dr. David Belasic, former president of the Eastern District, now makes stewardship presentations to audiences in the LCMS. He says this about the principles: "The most common reaction experienced when teaching the Biblical Stewardship Principles in parishes is 'that is sure a lot more meaningful than just talking about money.'"

Some who are present at his presentations react by saying: "This really has deepened my understanding of being God's steward in all the ways that I live my life."

Good stewardship is a result of the working of the Holy Spirit within our hearts and lives. But it also is a

*A pastor in Iowa used these eight Biblical Principles of Stewardship as the basis for a series of sermons on what it really means to be a steward.*

*A pastor in Missouri used the principles as a series of Sunday-morning Bible studies and reported that the discussion was productive, and that they barely had time to complete one principle in a 45-minute time period.*

natural response from us when we think about the great love that our Savior lavished on us as "The Chief Steward"—not just giving wealth or time, but sacrificially giving Himself into death for us. Doing the will of His Father in heaven was the chief driving force in His life and ministry. And doing the will of His Father in heaven cost him dearly but gained the gift of salvation for us!

Because of our sinfulness, we can never begin to live a perfect life of stewardship like Jesus did.

But because of the Holy Spirit's work within us, we can begin to will and do that which is pleasing to God.

Let's take a brief look at the eight Biblical stewardship principles intended to guide our attitudes and activities as God's stewards

### **1. God's stewards are God's stewards.**

At first glance, this principle sounds like "spin." However, it is the foundational principle. It states that we, God's stewards, because of our creation and re-creation in Holy Baptism, belong to God. This principle is a clear reminder that God's stewards are new creations each day of their lives (2 Cor. 5:14–17).

### **2. We are managers not owners.**

The Bible is very clear in pointing out that all things really belong to God (Ps. 24:1), and He entrusts a portion of that which He owns to His stewards to manage according to His purposes (Gen. 2:15).

In a sense, this principle underscores the truth that "God provides, but man divides." For example, there is more than enough of everything, including food, to meet the needs of all people the world over. But because there are still starving people in the world, we have to acknowledge a management issue.



Dr. David Belasic summed up Christian stewardship very well when he said: “Personally, I believe that the study of Biblical stewardship—and the theology, concepts, principles, models and examples given in the Scriptures—shows that stewardship and discipleship are very closely related and that the purpose of living for all of us baptized into the family of the Triune God is that our lives develop to become continuing contributions to the lives of others in the name of Christ. That is our holy calling and sacred privilege, individually and corporately.”

**3. We are saints and sinners.** Each of the principles involves a tension that is seen most clearly in this third principle. Dr. Martin Luther taught that we Christians are, at the very same time, saints and sinners. This is good news and this is bad news. We wrestle with sin every day, just as Paul wrote about in Rom. 7:15–25. Yet in Christ, we are saints who will and do that which is pleasing to God.



The greatest good work is faith—and that is a gift from God that He credits to us.

**4. We are uniquely singular, yet profoundly plural.** This principle strongly reminds each of us that our lives of stewardship are *personal* responses to God. Yet they are lived out within the community of faith (the church) to benefit the whole world. It reminds us also that “we are in this work together as God’s people and the banner over us is love” (1 Cor.12 and 13).

**5. We are in the world, but not of the world.** As Christian stewards, we believe that the Gospel of Jesus Christ transforms our attitudes about the world and the

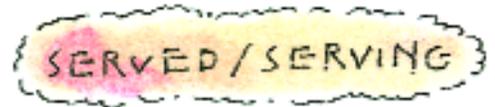


decisions we make. Our Christian stewardship is not limited to only “church-related” projects and activities. Jesus prayed on that night He was betrayed that His Father would protect His disciples from the evil one as they are sent out into the world as witnesses to the saving work of Jesus (John 17:15–18). He did not pray that the disciples would be taken out of the world.

**6. We are loved and loving.** Jesus taught His disciples this truth: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34–35).



**7. We are served and serving.** When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He taught them an important truth about being served and serving (John 13:3–5; 15–17). Just as He did not come into this world to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:26–28), so this principle asks us if we are willing to be servants—even to the point of doing those things that others might find distasteful.



**8. We are aware of the present, and future, of time and eternity.** An old expression parents sometimes use when their children are doing things they should not be doing is: “What on earth are you *doing* for heaven’s sake?” Well, if we change the emphasis slightly, this is a good question for Christian stewards to consider: “What on earth *are* you doing for heaven’s sake?” This principle reminds us to build up treasures in heaven by being rich in good deeds, generous and willing to share (1 Tim. 6:19–21).



A full text of the Biblical Stewardship Principles with Leader’s Notes is available free of cost by going to [www.lcms.org/stewardship](http://www.lcms.org/stewardship) and clicking on “Biblical Stewardship Principles.”

Rev. Larry Reinhardt is former director of Stewardship Ministry for LCMS District and Congregational Services. His email is [Larry.Reinhardt@lcms.org](mailto:Larry.Reinhardt@lcms.org)

# Thinking About Health

*Could an old standby coupled with a health savings account be right for you?*

Freitag says. If it is, an HSA can answer the question, "What HDHP funding opportunities are available?"

As with an IRA, contributions to an HSA are tax exempt and over time grow as a tax-exempt investment. As needed, "the funds invested in an HSA may be used to pay for out-of-pocket medical expenses not covered by the individual's high-deductible plan," Freitag says. "The funds not used roll over to the next year and continue to grow."

Used properly, HSAs and high-deductible health plans have important advantages for many people, Sanft says. They have the ability to reduce health-care premiums while allowing a worker to build retirement benefits.

However, the key, especially for employers, is "used properly," Sanft cautions. Used without planning, or as a way to unilaterally cut expenses, they could leave workers exposed to unanticipated medical expenses. Then, as an employer, "you have simply shifted the cost of health care to your workers," he says.

Freitag believes that HDHPs combined with HSAs offer potential benefits for the self-insured and the uninsured/underinsured. He cites a June 2006 report by American's Health Insurance Plans, an industry organization, that suggests that 31 percent of HSA participants were previously uninsured.

"That's a striking number," Freitag says. "It tells you that if we have any [members] who are uninsured, this may be a good product for them."

Like other financial institutions, the LCEF has been working hard to add HSAs to the products it provides clients, Freitag says. Effective Oct. 1, the LCEF will offer HSAs to qualified investors. The accounts are compatible not only with the HDHP offered by Concordia Plan Services but also with qualified plans offered by other employers and insurers.

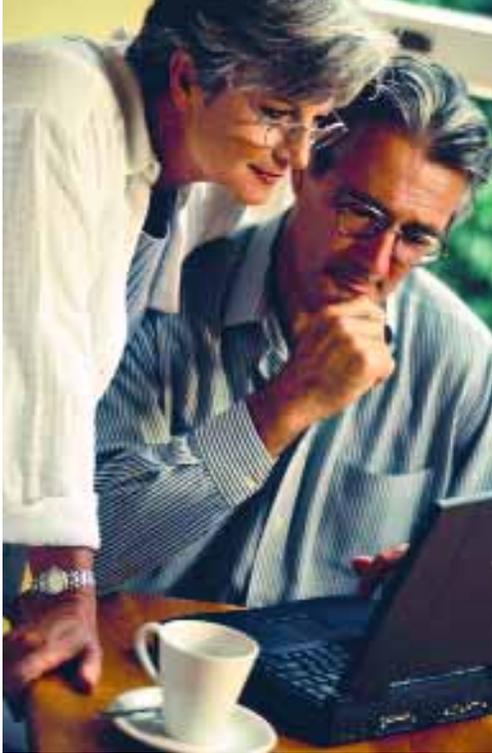
"Any employee with an HSA-compatible HDHP could work with LCEF," Freitag notes.

While an HDHP/HSA program may not be right for everyone, observes Glenn Mahnken, LCEF vice-president of marketing and customer support, it is a potentially attractive alternative to traditional programs. If you are reviewing your health-care plans for the coming year, and you think it might be appropriate for your needs, investigate it, he encourages.

For the church, and for individual Christians, health-care issues also have a stewardship component, Sanft and Freitag note. HSAs, along with HDHPs, encourage workers to consider health-care expenditures more carefully because the "first dollars" come from their own HSA savings rather than from insurance coverage.

"That's where we have a unique opportunity as a church," Sanft says. "The dollars [members] put into health care really are a stewardship issue. We want to be good stewards of our resources."

-----  
Jim Heine is a freelance writer. He is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis.



Masterfile

by James Heine

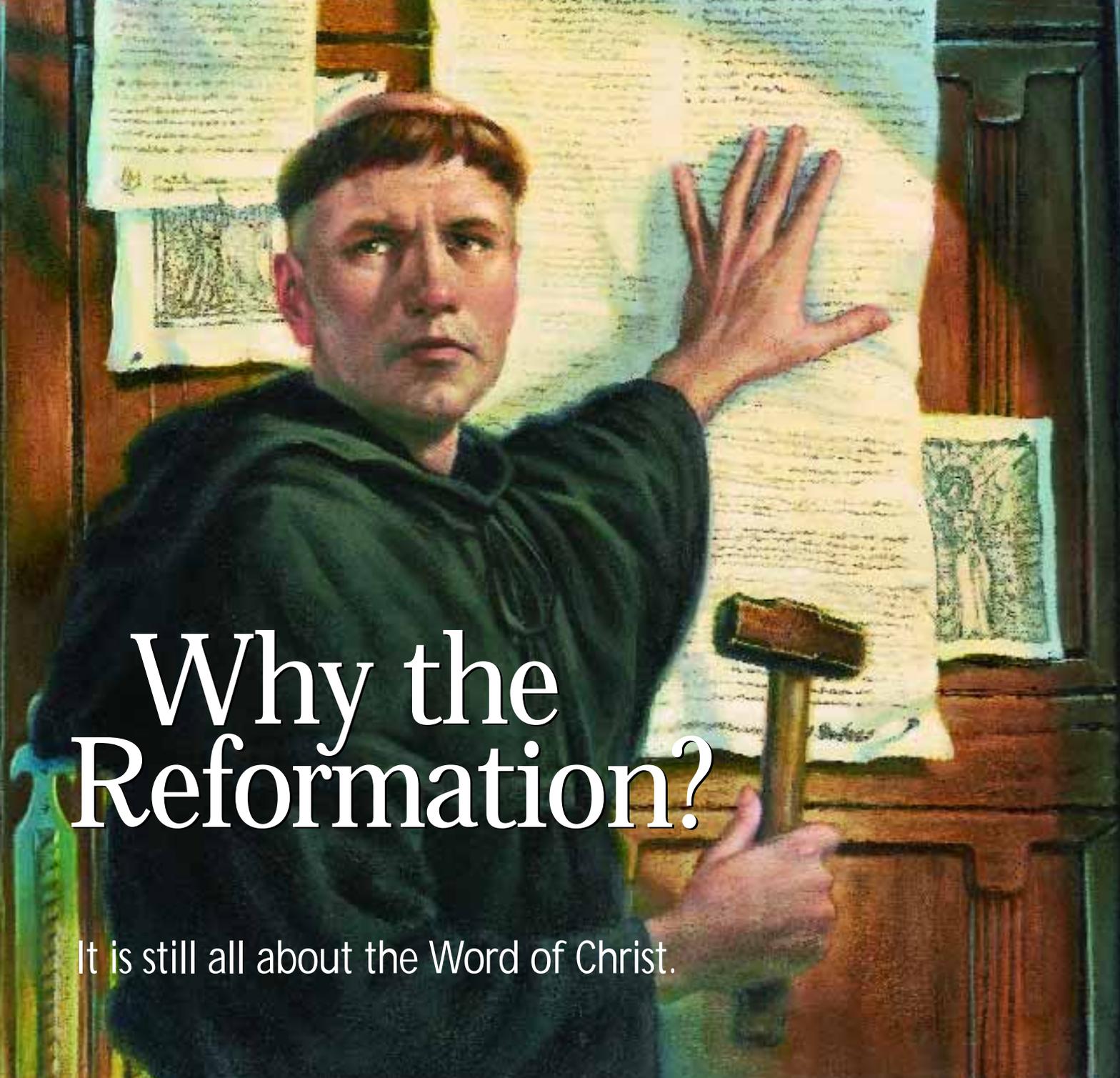
**A**mong the rituals of fall for many of us, none may be more perplexing than the annual requirement that we select our health-care program for the coming year. Each year seems to bring new options to consider—and new dilemmas, not only for those of us who mark Box A, B, or C on our health-care forms, but also for the companies and institutions who offer us the coverage.

Increasingly, deciding what kind of coverage to offer and how to pay for it is a significant family issue. For the church, there is the added issue of adequately supporting workers whose compensation packages are often less than those with similar credentials in secular professions.

For some, one answer may be a high-deductible health plan (HDHP) coupled with a health savings account (HSA), says Merle Freitag, president of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund.

Designed to complement an HDHP (i.e., that old standby, the major medical plan), an HSA may be described as a "medical IRA," explain Freitag and Jim Sanft, Concordia Plan Services executive vice-president and COO.

The first step is to decide whether a high-deductible plan is right for you,



# Why the Reformation?

It is still all about the Word of Christ.

## *Reformation Day October 31*

Read Revelation 3:7–13

by C.F.W. Walther

**I**n today's reading, Christ clearly tells us how the true Church can be recognized: "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name" (Rev. 3:8). Here we see that, outwardly, the Christian Church has "a little power." It is powerless and insignificant before the world, but it keeps Christ's Word and confesses His name.

If we examine our Lutheran Church in light of this, we must say that it brightly bears these marks, as the sun does the light. If we consider the outward form of our Church, we must exclaim, with the prophet, "O afflicted one, storm-tossed and not comforted" (Is. 54:11).

Nevertheless, Christ can say to us, as He did to the congregation at Philadelphia, "I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name." Why, then, did Luther separate himself from the church leaders in Rome? Was it because of misgivings of his reason? No. He was drawn into the great battle because he could not retreat from Holy Scripture. To cite only one example, what did he say when he stood before the emperor in Worms and was ordered to recant? He said: "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, or by patent, clear, and cogent reasons and arguments, and because the passages cited and quoted by me have convinced and grounded my conscience in God's Word, therefore I cannot and will not recant. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me! Amen."

Luther was so minded, and this is also the mind of the Church that bears his name. This is not because Luther was the Church's leader, whom it unconditionally followed. It is not because it believed in Luther, but because it believes, as Luther did, in Christ's Word. The Lutheran Church was established upon the principle that the words of Scripture cannot be added to or taken away, and it still relies on that principle, which stands at the very top of its confession as its heart and life. If we are asked what a Lutheran is, we can offer no better answer than this: A Lutheran is a Christian who strictly keeps to the letter of the Scripture. This is the mark by which he is distinguished from all other Christians.

Just as our Church has kept Christ's Word, so it has also not denied Christ's name. Everyone who has read only a few pages of Luther's writings knows he faithfully confessed Christ's name. No other teacher since the time of the apostles has so clearly, comfortingly, and

powerfully explained the doctrine of justification through faith in Christ. Luther wrote, "In my heart alone rules and should also rule this one article, that is, faith in my dear Lord Christ, who is the only beginning, middle, and end of all my spiritual and divine thoughts, which I may evermore have day and night." Our

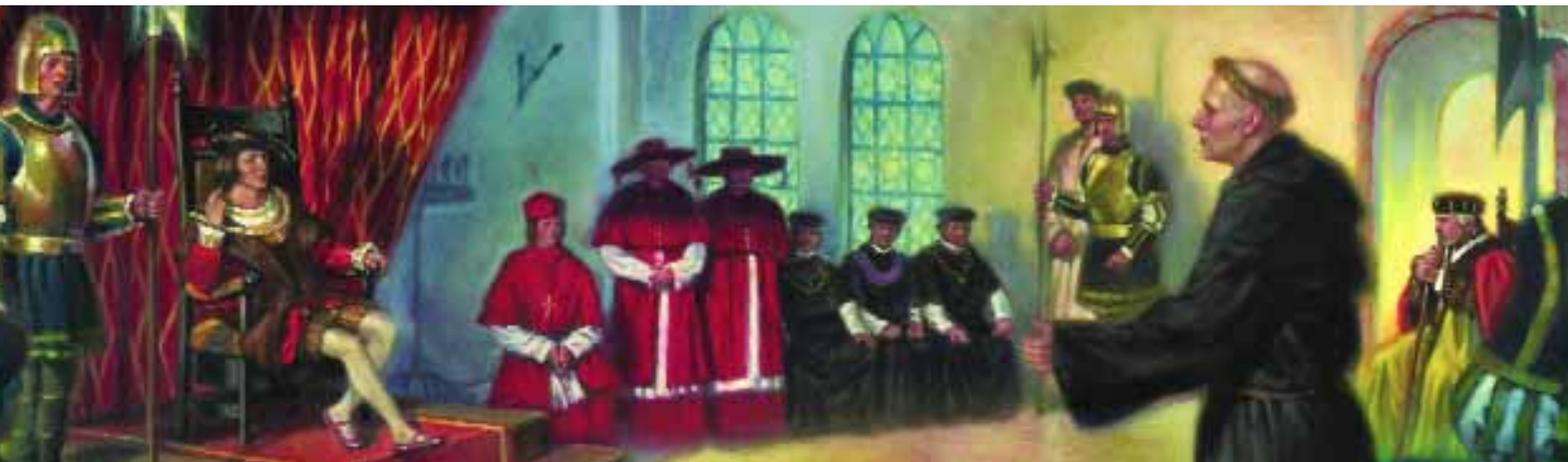
Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,  
For round us falls the eventide.  
O Let Your Word, that saving light,  
Shine forth undimmed into the night.

In these last days of great distress  
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness  
That we keep pure till life is spent  
Your holy Word and Sacrament.

(LSB 585: 1, 2)

Lutheran Church has followed Luther's lead. Unlike any other church, it has, from its beginning, preached that a person becomes righteous only through faith in Christ, without the work of the Law. The eternal, golden foundation of faith and hope is not the work, repentance, contrition, betterment, sanctification, or suffering of man, but solely Christ's grace, merit, innocence, righteousness, active and passive obedience, suffering, and death. Our Church teaches all sinners to build upon this foundation.

-----  
Dr. C.F.W. Walther was the first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Excerpted from *God Grant It: Daily Devotions from C.F.W. Walther*, translated by Gerhard P. Grabenhofer © 2006 Concordia Publishing House.





# An Unprecedented Opportunity

In December 2004, “Ellen” and “John” came from Asia to an American

medical-school campus where John had been given a research position. While John worked, Ellen stayed at home, lonely and isolated in this new, strange culture.

What happened next was shared with me by Marcia Mittwede, who works with the Missouri Synod’s International Student Ministry. I’d like to share the story with you.

One day, Ellen met Irene Paul, a member of an LCMS congregation. Irene befriended Ellen and offered to care for her children so that she could attend English classes. Over time, Irene invited Ellen to attend a Bible class. Because she didn’t want to disappoint Irene, Ellen agreed to come.

She had never before studied the Bible.

“One day I became very eager to be baptized—I’m not sure why, except that God’s Word worked very powerfully in my heart,” Ellen recounts now. And so, on Jan. 6 this year, Ellen and her two children were baptized at Irene’s LCMS church.

There’s more. John, seeing a change in Ellen’s life, has begun to attend church and Bible class with his wife. Ellen also has been instrumental in bringing several other families to the church so that they might also learn of this Jesus who has changed her life.

This story illustrates the *unprecedented opportunity* that we Missouri Synod Lutherans have for sharing the Good News of Jesus with people of other cultures. More than a half million of the brightest and best students in the world are on U.S. college and university campuses, sent here to prepare for leadership back home in government, business, the professions, and education. These students come from practically every nation in the world, many from places that do not allow traditional missionaries.

International students are far from home, family, friends, and all that is familiar. They are very open to friendships and new ways of thinking and believing. While there are more than 70 locations with intentional LCMS outreach to international students, there are dozens more campuses where this mission field is untapped and students are waiting for someone, *anyone*, to befriend them.

Consider these facts about the 660,000 international students and scholars who currently are study-

ing in the United States:

- 90 percent are not Christian.
- 80 percent never have had a Christian friend.
- 70 percent are never invited into an American home for a meal.
- They come from 188 countries.
- 66 percent are from Asia.
- Two-thirds come from the “10-40 Window,” that part of the world that is the poorest and has the least exposure to Christianity.
- 80 percent will return to their homelands.

This month we celebrate the Reformation, when God used Martin Luther to restore the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world of sinners in need of forgiveness. Jesus has told us to go into the whole world to proclaim that Gospel so that many more may receive the free gift of life and salvation that this Good News offers.

We in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are responding through the worldwide *Ablaze!* movement—seeking to share the Good News with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. And, right here among us are future world leaders with whom we can share the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ—a tremendous opportunity to be *Ablaze!*

If you would like more information about how your congregation can begin a ministry among international students at a campus near you, please contact Rev. Carl Selle, LCMS missionary to international students, at (715) 345-6510. Or e-mail him at [cselle@uwsp.edu](mailto:cselle@uwsp.edu). You also can go to [www.isminc.org](http://www.isminc.org) on the Web for resources and a listing of current LCMS intentional ministries among international students.

What better and more godly way to celebrate the Reformation this year than to tell others, including international students, what Jesus has done for them?

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

e-mail: [president@lcms.org](mailto:president@lcms.org)

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

Jerry Kieschnick

John 3:16–17