



THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™



2007 LCMS Convention: A Report

VOL. 126 | NO. 7 | AUGUST 2007

3

IGNITING
HEARTS

16

IN THE SHADOW
OF DEATH

20

MAINTENANCE
TO MISSION

www.lcms.org/witness



3 FAN INTO FLAME: IGNITING HEARTS

by Ron Nelson

Fan into Flame gifts support Ghana seminary construction. Redeemer, Fredericksburg—a congregation *Ablaze!*

6 ONE MESSAGE: CHRIST

by James Heine

A report on the 63rd Regular LCMS Convention held July 14–19 in Houston.

16 IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH

by Roland Lovstad

Military chaplains speak of life eternal.

20 FROM MAINTENANCE TO MISSION

by Diane Strzelecki

A childcare ministry reignites a suburban congregation and creates new outreach opportunities in its community.



6



6



16



20



16

On the cover: Shortly after winning re-election to his third three-year term, Synod President Gerald B. Kieschnick was joined on the stage by his wife, Terry.

TO THE READER

With this issue, we salute and say goodbye to Mr. Don Folkemer, managing editor of *The Lutheran Witness* for the past eight years.



Folkemer

Under Don, who retired July 31st, the *Witness* held its own during a tough time for denominational magazines, whose circulations across the board have been falling for many years. This is a testament to (1) the loyalty of *Witness* readers; (2) Don's colleagues at

Concordia Publishing House and the International Center; (3) the writers, photographers, and illustrators employed by Don; and (4) Don himself.

Don gave all he had to the *Witness*—long hours, painstaking attention to detail, and the wisdom wrought from years of experience in the publishing business. More than an editor, he was well-versed in the whole realm of magazine production, from printing presses to advertising and marketing to U.S. postal regulations. Don knew his stuff.

Don and his wife, Pam, have two sons, two daughters-in-law, and a handsome young grandson. We pray God's blessing on the Folkemer family, especially now that its head, Don, has called it a career. If you would care to send well-wishes to Don, please send them to me (david.strand@lcms.org), and I'll make sure Don gets them.

Congratulations on your retirement, Don.

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

DEPARTMENTS

4 LETTERS

15 SEARCHING SCRIPTURE

24 NOTICES

27 SHEDDING SOME LIGHT

29 FROM THE PRESIDENT

COMING IN SEPTEMBER ...

- Christian Exclusivity in a Pluralistic Society
- Kids Reaching Kids
- Planning Your Funeral

Fan into Flame: Igniting Hearts

by Ron Nelson

Fan into Flame gifts support Ghana seminary construction

Donors to the LCMS *Fan into Flame* campaign have designated major gifts toward the construction of a new seminary campus on 30 acres of prime land northeast of Accra, Ghana. The earmarked funds contributed to date are being distributed. The Schwan Foundation, LCMS World Mission, LCMS World Relief and Human Care, and donors to *Fan into Flame* are sharing the project cost of nearly \$1 million.

The campus will be completed in phases, with parts of the academic and residence complex to be completed first. When complete, the campus will have an administration building; three multiuse classrooms; a library, dining hall, and kitchen; three student dormitories; and two staff homes. The architect and project manager is MSAADA of Minneapolis, Minn., a firm with international offices and extensive construction experience.

The completed campus will accommodate 120 students.

When one considers that the current facilities can accommodate only 17 seminary students, the future for growth in Gospel proclamation in the Lutheran Church of Ghana and the whole of English-speaking West Africa is clear.

While major gifts have been received, more than 40 percent of the cost remains to be raised through *Fan into Flame*, the financial arm of the Synod's *Ablaze!* movement. Donors are encouraged to join the partnership already in place.

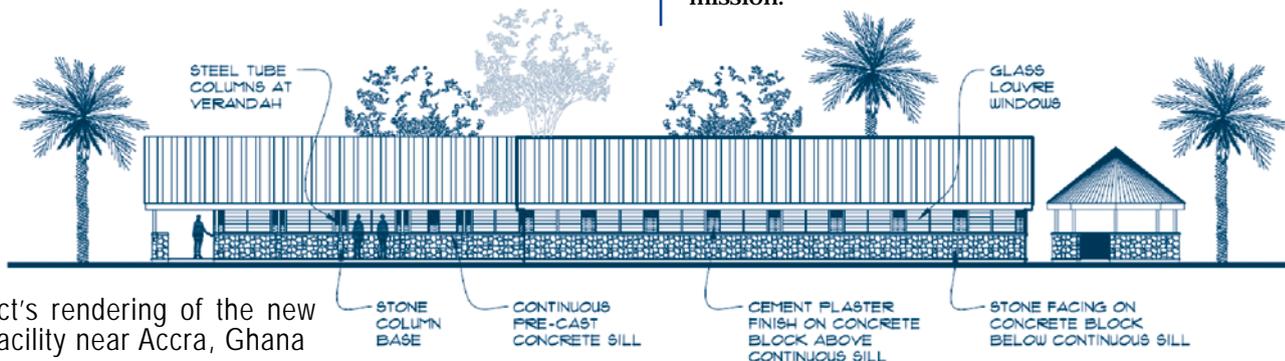
Redeemer, Fredericksburg — a congregation *Ablaze!*

Already involved in a number of special projects, working toward planting a new mission, and living with an overflowing calendar, Redeemer, Fredericksburg, Va., had every reason to put out the flames of *Ablaze!*

Instead, the congregation chose to move forward with a simple appeal and identified a team of six people who prepared and bathed the appeal in prayer. Three cottage meetings and a gathering for youth followed the spiritual preparation. Rev. Fred Klein of Living Savior, Fairfax Station, was invited to direct the cottage meetings and share the *Ablaze!* vision.

The congregation was led to a generous response totaling \$153,540, or 300 percent of its goal. The congregation's share of the funds will support regional, national, and international missions, as well as continue support of current outreach ministries at Redeemer.

Ablaze! for God's Mission, in partnership with *Fan into Flame*, is a movement to inspire individuals and congregations in the Southeastern District to respond as recipients of God's abundant grace through the sharing of resources in the work of mission.



An architect's rendering of the new seminary facility near Accra, Ghana

Rev. Ronald E. Nelson is director of donor communications for LCMS World Mission Support.

Fan into Flame is the national campaign in support of the *Ablaze!* vision of LCMS World Mission and its partners to share the Gospel with 100 million unreached or uncommitted people globally by 2017. The campaign, approved by the 2004 LCMS convention (Res. 1-04), supports outreach activities of *Ablaze!* and seeks gifts of \$100 million by 2010.

Fan into Flame unrestricted funds are distributed quarterly based on an Acts 1:8 model: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ... Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Of the net proceeds, distributions consist of

- 15 percent to participating congregations;
- 15 percent to the district;
- 20 percent for national mission projects;
- 50 percent to fund LCMS World Mission global projects.

Is God green?

I enjoyed “Is God Green” by Rev. Matthew Nelson in the May issue of *The Lutheran Witness*. The question some Lutherans ask is this: Just how green can we be and still remain Christians? The green revolution can encompass many areas that relegate God to a bystander in the formation of this earth.

To believe in global warming, we must assume that man alone is responsible for this perceived problem, and that man alone can solve it. Never mentioned is the fact that God created the earth, brought forth the Flood, parted the Red Sea and Jordan River, allowed droughts from time to time, and was responsible for the many weather-related

I also find it difficult to rationalize spending more money on our pets than we offer to the Lord who created them.

Insofar as the craze for natural or organic foods is concerned, I believe God gave us the artificial fertilizers, the herbicides, pesticides, and the technical ability to alter the genetic characteristics of animals and plants to feed an ever-increasing population. I believe also that we have the safest, the most abundant, and cheapest food available in the world. That we are healthier and living longer is a testament to the ability of the American farmer to receive and properly use the technical expertise God has so richly given him.

*Jack Pierce
Charleston, Ill.*

bility to care for it show that Christians especially have a key part to play in preserving the world and all life in it. We need many more studies, articles, sermons, etc., to help raise awareness from a theological perspective of our partnership with the Lord in this vital endeavor.

*Rev. Don Hoeferkamp
St. Louis, Mo.*

Preparing pastors

Kudos to our seminaries for offering courses and training in “Preparing Pastors Worldwide” (May). Now if they could just squeeze in a course and training on the subject of stewardship.

I truly believe that manifold benefits to congregations and our Synod as a whole would soon result.

*Ray Roth
Clearwater, Fla.*

Online issues

We’re encouraging our members to use the online version of *The Lutheran Witness* (www.lcms.org/witness). I especially appreciate the Web-exclusive stories. However, why do you require people to subscribe to read the entire article of the current issue? I don’t appreciate “teaser” articles that require the reader to pay to receive the entire article. I don’t think that’s a good way to encourage people to learn more about the Missouri Synod.

Is there a way to make all articles readable online?

*Rev. James Kreft
Bethesda, Md.*

Pastor Kreft is correct. Each month, just a few items—the cover story, “Letters,” “Lifeline,” and “From the President”—are offered in full on the Witness Web site. The other stories and departments are merely “teased.” As with other magazines, we find that, if we post the entire issue online each



The question some Lutherans ask is this: Just how green can we be and still remain Christians? The green revolution can encompass many areas that relegate God to a bystander in the formation of this earth.

*Jack Pierce
Charleston, Ill.*

plagues the Egyptians brought on themselves. We recall that the sun, still burning brightly, having never wavered in its ability to sustain life on this earth for thousands of years, was placed there by a creating God. One might add that God at one time commanded the sun to stand still for 24 hours. So I am reluctant to embrace the widely accepted theory that man has produced global warming, or that he can do anything about it.

Having said that, I am cognizant of the fact that God expects us to treat the earth and the animals thereon with respect, while continuing to use them both for our benefit and enjoyment. I am finding that there seems to be a fine line today between simply caring for our animals and the near worship of them.

It was heartening to see a major article on God’s good earth. I’m glad the church is addressing environmental issues today, because I firmly believe this is an area we have long neglected.

Actually, though, our Synod’s Board for Parish Education did publish a Sunday-school course 35 years ago in the “Mission:Life” series. It was a fourth-grade course titled “Our Environment—the Earth.” We took our lumps from some who thought this was inappropriate for religious education, but perhaps it planted a few seeds in the minds and hearts of some who are now in their 40s—seeds that are now growing and bearing fruit.

Truly, the hundreds of biblical passages dealing with the wonders of God’s creation and our responsi-

month, there isn't much incentive for people to subscribe to the print version, which makes it hard to stay in business. The good news is, come the following month, all of the previous month's issue is indeed posted online (just click "Search Archives" on the Witness site—www.lcms.org/witness). In fact, the archives contain the entirety of every issue of the Witness dating back to 2002.

As Pastor Kreft notes, there are other reasons for going to the online site—Web-exclusive material in the form of more letters-to-the-editor, forums, photo library, e-cards, etc. We sincerely appreciate his encouraging his members to visit the site and hope other pastors will do the same. — Ed.

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.



Official periodical of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through the Board for Communication Services, Ernest E. Garbe, chairman; David L. Strand, executive director.

Staff: David L. Strand, interim executive editor; James H. Heine, interim managing editor; John Krus, senior designer; Robert Sexton, marketing manager and advertising sales; Pam Burgdorf, coordinator; Carla Dubbelde, editorial manager, district editions; Karen Higgins, editorial assistant; editorial office: 1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; (314) 996-1202, Ext. 1228.

© 2007 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Reproduction of a single article or column for parish use only does not require permission of THE LUTHERAN WITNESS. Such reproductions, however, should credit THE LUTHERAN WITNESS as the source. Cover images are not reproducible without permission. Also, photos credited to sources outside the LCMS are not to be copied.

Published 11 times per year by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. Individual subscription \$22.00 per year. Organized congregation subscriptions and district editions offered at reduced rate if submitted through local churches. Standard A postage paid at St. Louis, MO.

For subscription information or address changes,

e-mail: magazines@cph.org

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

1-888-THE LCMS (843-5267) www.lcms.org

e-mail: LUTHERAN.WITNESS@lcms.org

Member: Associated Church Press

Evangelical Press Association

August 2007 (ISSN: 0024-757X) Vol. 126, No. 7

Cover photo by Kris Bueltmann

To subscribe, renew, or to give a gift subscription, call Concordia Publishing House at: 800-325-3381.

One Message: Christ!



The 63rd Regular LCMS Convention met July 14–19 in Houston and took important steps regarding the Synod’s future.



Compiled by James Heine

“One Message — *Christ! His Love Is Here for You!*”

This theme, the theme of the 63rd Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, echoed daily through the halls of the cavernous George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston July 14–19.

The message echoed through the Texas-sized facility in the convention sermon of LCMS President Gerald B. Kieschnick, who was elected to a third consecutive term as the Synod’s chief executive. It echoed in the words of the convention’s Bible studies and devotions — and in the presentations of committee chairs and guest speakers. It echoed from the lips of delegates and guests who filled the convention center and its nearby hotels. And it echoed in the pre-convention outreach training at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Houston July 13: *One message — Christ: His love is here for you — today!*

By the numbers, the 2007 LCMS convention officially included 1,239 voting delegates — 620 pastors and 619 laypeople — 328 advisory delegates, 34 district presidents, three *ad hoc* committee members, two former officers, and 27 invited guests. Approximately 3,500 people attended the convention’s opening worship, and on a daily basis, others stopped in for a short visit or browsed the convention’s busy vendor displays.

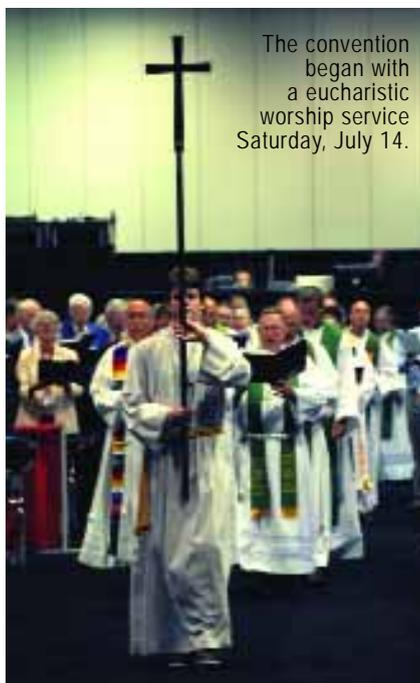
A convention, however, is more than a collection of delegates selected to attend its sessions. It is also a living, breathing body that develops a life and personality of its own.

In many respects, the LCMS’ 63rd Regular Convention was among the most productive in recent years, and because of several resolutions it adopted, it may turn out to be a watershed moment for our 160-year-old church body.

At the conclusion of the convention, Kieschnick thanked the delegates and congratulated them on their work. He noted that he had attended every Synod convention since 1971, and in his opinion, the 2007 gathering demonstrated by far a greater sense of collegiality and harmony, combined with frank discussion of the issues, than any in his experience. He commended the delegates for the spirit of “trust and Christian respect that grew throughout the convention,” even at times when the issues were debated vigorously.

Synod Secretary Raymond L. Hartwig echoed Kieschnick’s observations.

“Overall, the tone of the convention was positive, more positive than some other of our Synod’s conventions,” he said. “The delegates seemed to be well prepared, and there was good debate on most issues. While there were significant issues discussed, rarely were voices raised.”



Hartwig also noted that streaming the activities of the convention live on the Internet added a new dimension to convention coverage for LCMS members.

“The use of this opportunity increased as the convention proceeded,” Hartwig said. “It allowed the people of the Synod to observe firsthand the convention conducting its business. What an important learning opportunity for people who have never observed a convention of their Synod!”

Getting down to business

In its five days of morning and afternoon sessions (Thursday, the last day of the convention, was a morning session only), the convention considered nearly 100 resolutions, adopting all but a few. Of those resolutions, any list of the most significant would likely include resolutions to endorse the calling of a special convention in 2009, the declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship with The American Association of Lutheran Churches, and the endorsement of a Specific Ministry Pastor Program. Also at the top of such a list: resolutions to support the revitalization of 2,000 LCMS congregations by 2017 (see sidebar, p. 9), to state the position of the LCMS on stem-cell research, and to clarify the relationship between Synod’s Board of Directors and its Commission on Constitutional Matters.

But first, elections ...

A third term

Nearly the first order of business for any convention is the election of the president of the Synod. On the opening day of the convention, Kieschnick was elected on the first ballot to a third term as the Synod’s chief officer, receiving 52.3 percent of the votes. On the slate with Kieschnick were Dr. William R. Diekelman, Rev. Daniel Preus, Rev. Wallace R. Schulz, and Dr. John W. Wohlrabe Jr.

In subsequent elections, Diekelman was re-elected as first vice-president of the Synod. Dr. Paul Maier was elected second vice-president; Wohlrabe, third vice-president; and Dr. Dean Nadasdy and Dr. David Buegler fourth and fifth vice-presidents respectively.

In other elections, Hartwig was reelected as the secretary of Synod

President George Bush sent a videotape greeting to the convention. “You are providing light in times of darkness and making our world a better place,” he said.



and Thomas W. Kuchta as vice-president—finance/treasurer.

In remarks after his election, Kieschnick called attention to the anniversary of the Reformation forthcoming in 2017.

“We look forward to the many opportunities that exist,” Kieschnick said, “especially in the next 10 years leading up to the 500th

anniversary of the Reformation—opportunities for providing collective, courageous leadership in Lutheran churches around the world, and through our confessional witness to the entire Christian church on earth.”

In concluding his remarks, Kieschnick thanked the Council of Presidents, other officers of the Synod, and his family for their support.

A special convention

By a vote of 793–325, delegates on the last day of the convention authorized the Council of Presidents and the President of the Synod to call a special convention in 2009 if the council and the president determine that such a convention is necessary.

The special convention would have as its only task the consideration of Synod structure and governance.

According to the resolution, the president is directed to meet with the Council of Presidents within 90 days of the close of the 2007 convention, and after discussions with other Synod officials, the presidents of the Synod’s two seminaries, and the Commissions on Theology and Church Relations and Constitutional Matters, determine whether a special convention is required. A two-thirds vote of the Council of Presidents would be required to call the special convention.

Former Synod presidents Ralph Bohlmann and Robert Kuhn (who is also the chairman of Synod’s Board of Directors) endorsed the resolution, as did Thomas Kuchta, Synod vice-president—finance and Synod treasurer. All said that for the Synod to operate efficiently in the coming years, a more streamlined structure must be adopted.

In his address, Kuhn compared the Synod’s structure to an old house—charming and lovely and historic, indeed, but also in need of constant remodeling. “It’s time to build a new house,” he said.

Kuhn also told the delegates the Board of Directors felt it was “strategically



Kieschnick



important” to have a special convention.

The delegates were not persuaded easily. Vigorous discussion ensued over several sessions before a substitute resolution (8-07S) offered by Rev. Kenneth Roberts, a delegate from the Pacific Southwest District, addressed both delegate concerns and the desires of the committee proposing the resolution.

Citing delegate concerns, Dr. Larry A. Stoterau, Pacific Southwest District president and co-chair of the floor committee presenting the resolution, asked, on behalf of the committee, for “forgiveness” for some of the misunderstandings that had occurred during the discussion of the proposal. “In the spirit of working together” he moved that the substitute resolution require a two-thirds vote to adopt. (As a substitute resolution, the measure would have required only a majority vote.) The delegates agreed immediately, and after further debate, the resolution passed by the 70.9 percent margin noted above.

Following the adoption of the resolution, Kieschnick expressed his “deep appreciation” for the manner in which the delegates addressed the topic.

A new partner church

With the adoption of Res. 3-01 on Monday, July 16, the convention declared the LCMS in altar and pulpit fellowship with The American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC). The AALC becomes the 30th Lutheran body with which the Synod has such fellowship—and the first North American body with which it has such an association.

Rev. Thomas Aadland, presiding pastor of The American Association of Lutheran Churches, signs the protocol document establishing altar and pulpit fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. With Aadland are LCMS President Gerald B. Kieschnick (*front*) and Synod Secretary Raymond Hartwig (*rear*).



The Praesidium of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, from right: Dr. Gerald B. Kieschnick, president, and Synod vice-presidents 1 through 5: Dr. William R. Diekelman, Dr. Paul Maier, Dr. John Wohlrabe Jr., Dr. Dean Nadasdy, Dr. David Buegler.

The national offices of the AALC are in Fort Wayne, Ind., and its seminary is currently housed on the grounds of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne.

Established in 1987 by pastors and congregations concerned about the doctrinal positions of the church bodies involved in the merger negotiations that led to the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988, the AALC comprises 78 congregations and approximately 14,100 baptized members. It has slightly more than 100 pastors.

“By the action you have just taken, and by that taken by the AALC in convention last month, we have just declared fellowship with one another in those sacred gifts given by our Lord Himself to us, which He bestows upon us through His holy Word and Sacrament,” said Rev. Thomas Aadland, AALC presiding pastor. “This is truly an awesome thing—that the unity we have in Christ has now been so expressed because of mutually recognized concord in faith and life.”

The declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship recognizes agreement in doctrine and practice between the LCMS and the AALC and permits the members of each to commune at each other’s altars, and for LCMS and AALC pastors to exchange pulpits.

Specific ministry pastors

To meet the urgent mission needs of the LCMS, the delegates to the convention approved a resolution (5-01B) to establish a new ministry track to prepare men for ordination.

The “Specific Ministry Pastor Program” prepares pastors for specific ministries such as outreach to immigrant communities or service in specific mission fields. The program employs distance education, pastor mentoring, and on-campus seminary instruction—before and

Revitalizing Congregations

The first resolution adopted by convention delegates encourages the Synod, in conjunction with its *Ablaze!* goals, to revitalize at least 2,000 existing congregations by 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

The resolution describes revitalized congregations as “regularly and consistently making new disciples and renewing their members in order that they make new disciples through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Referring to Martin Luther in an *Ablaze!* presentation immediately before the resolution was submitted to the convention, Butch Almstedt, Board for Mission Services chairman, quoted from *Luther and World Mission* by Ingemar Öberg. Almstedt reminded delegates of the author’s words: “Despite their predilection to silence, Luther challenges believers in Christ to open their mouths and to witness to what they have experienced of God’s salvation.”

Almstedt told delegates, “You are a missionary right

where you live and right where you work.”

Ablaze! Almstedt said, is about challenging LCMS members “to be passionate about witnessing to lost souls for Christ. It is about building more worshiping communities, more congregations at home and abroad.”

As adopted by the delegates, the resolution notes that 67 congregations are participating in a pilot program to test mission-revitalization strategies. It asks the Synod to “pray and work” for mission revitalization through its districts, congregations, and other entities.

— J.H.H.

after ordination—to train candidates accepted into the program. Although they will proceed at their own pace, candidates may qualify for ordination as a “Specific Ministry Pastor” in about two years, explained Dr. Jon Diefenthaler, chairman of the convention’s Floor Committee for Seminary and University Education, which presented the resolution for adoption.

The new program has the support of the Synod’s two seminaries.

District presidents will nominate students for the program. Students will also go through the same admissions process as traditional seminary students, but they will continue serving their “home” ministries while they study.

Dr. Andrew Bartelt, Concordia Seminary vice-president for academic affairs, said the new program marks a “significant change” for pastoral ministry by taking advantage of modern technology and distance-education models. He told delegates it resolves the need for pastors in “a positive, constructive, and theologically responsible way.”

The program’s goal is a good one—“more pastors,” Bartelt said. “Good pastors who are about seeking and saving the lost and nurturing them in the faith until Christ comes again.”

Dr. Lawrence Rast, Concordia Theological Seminary academic dean, assured the delegates that specific ministry pastors “will be well-instructed in our confessional theology” and under the supervision of the seminary faculties. He said the new program fits his seminary’s commitment to prepare pastors in both traditional and nontraditional ways.

Once ordained, a Specific Ministry Pastor will be able to conduct a Word and Sacrament ministry only in the circumstances

to which he has been called. He will be supervised by fellow pastors and his district president.

LCMS missionary Tim Nickel, who serves in Kyrgyzstan, called the program a “wise and creative solution” to the Synod’s shortage of pastors, especially in mission fields such as his, where the number of congregations planted far outstrips the number of pastors available to serve them.

Over the next few years, the Specific Ministry Pastor Program will replace DELTO (Distance Education Leading to Ordination), the current non-traditional pastoral-education program. Unlike DELTO, the Specific Ministry Pastor Program will offer students the opportunity to continue their studies and earn a master of divinity degree at Concordia Seminary or Concordia Theological Seminary.

Addressing issues and opportunities

Not only did the delegates adopt the resolutions just mentioned, they also adopted a host of resolutions concerning a variety of issues and opportunities, including the following:

Missions. Delegates approved resolutions to prepare a new study on the priesthood of all believers and to report detailed accounting of *Fan into Flame* funds. They also approved resolutions to commend the LWML, Lutheran Hour Ministries, and LCMS chaplains.



Dr. Robert Roegner, LCMS World Mission executive director, presented a report on *Ablaze!* to the convention. He also introduced the convention’s “*Ablaze!* Moments”—brief videotaped stories of faith-sharing opportunities. Later Roegner announced that an *Ablaze!* DVD containing the faith-sharing stories will be made available to congregations this fall.



Delegates spend a moment in prayer.

District and Congregational Services.

The convention approved several resolutions dealing with worship: To foster greater understanding of worship through theological conferences, to provide guidance and direction for use of contemporary worship resources, and to commend the Commission on Worship for the *Lutheran Service Book*. The delegates also endorsed resolutions to encourage individual confession and absolution, to celebrate the anniversaries of several Synod founders, and to initiate planning for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Theology and Church Relations.

In addition to declaring altar and pulpit fellowship with the AALC, the delegates directed the CTCR to develop a plan for confessional leadership and to address

environmental issues. Delegates also encouraged congregations that allow open Communion to “return to faithful Communion practices by practicing close(d) Communion.” They called for a study of the natural knowledge of God, and requested further guidance for civic events that include serial prayers.

Program and Finance. Stating that division diverts energies from mission, convention delegates directed the Council of Presidents and the Board of Directors to address mistrust in the Synod

and to shape a strategy to restore harmony. The delegates also adopted a resolution to encourage stewardship renewal and requested the Council of Presidents to develop a mentoring and training program for clergy with an emphasis on biblical whole-life stewardship, to be presented to the 2010 convention. The convention also commended the LCMS Foundation for its 50 years



As part of a Houston outreach effort, convention participants and volunteers canvassed neighborhoods July 14.



Delegates await their turn to address the convention.

of service, encouraged support for the Center for Hispanic Studies at Concordia Seminary, and voted to hold the 2010 LCMS convention in Houston.

Seminary and University Education. In addition to establishing the Specific Ministry Pastor Program, the convention directed the Board for Pastoral Education and the Council of Presidents to “study the situations currently served by licensed lay deacons to determine whether there continues to be a genuine need for the program within the Synod.” The delegates directed the two entities to prepare a report on the issue for the 2010 convention. Delegates also voted to strengthen the boards of regents of the Synod’s two seminaries and the schools of the Concordia University System. They also approved a resolution encouraging pastors to develop a plan for continuing theological education. The resolution further encour-



Approximately 3,500 people attended the convention's opening worship.

ages congregations to aid pastors in this effort by granting study leaves and financial aid to help cover the cost of the education.

Human Care. In addition to urging the Synod and its members to give public witness to the LCMS position on stem-cell research, convention delegates adopted resolutions to give thanks for disaster relief

and support, to develop abuse-education materials and programs, and to encourage the church to include people with disabilities in all aspects of its life.

Delegates also adopted a resolution that calls on LCMS World Relief and Human Care to conduct ongoing conversations with LCMS Recognized Service Organizations that place adopted or foster children so they do not “knowingly place adopted or foster children into any intrinsically sinful situation where individuals and families are not living in accordance with the Lord’s revealed and natural law.”

Planning and Administration. In introducing the work of his floor committee to the convention, Indiana District president Dan May noted that “the interesting work of Committee 7 is interesting only to a few because it deals with a lot of minutiae and detail.”

Nevertheless, delegates followed the work of the committee closely, adopting a resolution to promote “transparency” in the governance of the Synod and its institutions, amending a bylaw concerning emeritus—retired—members of the Synod and another dealing with the Synod’s doctrinal-review process.

The principal function of the resolution calling for transparency will be to direct agencies of the Synod to announce upcoming meetings and, upon request, to make available the minutes of Synod board and commission meetings.

Synod Structure and Governance. In addition to authorizing the President of the Synod and the Council of Presidents to con-



The exhibit area at the 2007 LCMS convention featured a variety of displays by Synod boards, commissions, and agencies; Registered Service Organizations; and retail and commercial businesses ranging from office-products companies to moving and storage companies. From top to bottom: the Board for Black Ministry Services booth, staff members of LCMS World Mission, the LWML booth, and the convention’s Mission Festival Park.

sider a special convention, delegates also adopted carefully worded amendments to Synod’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The aim is to clarify authority between the Synod’s Board of Directors and the Commission on Constitutional Matters. The delegates also affirmed the Synod’s dispute-resolution process, recommended the study of CTCR documents relating to public rebuke of public sin, and encouraged congregations to “include the words *inspired, inerrant, infallible* and/or *revealed* in their constitutions and/or bylaws.”

Assessment and impressions

In reviewing the work of the convention, Synod secretary Raymond Hartwig observed that the convention addressed some significant issues.

“I personally believe that Res. 8-01 [clarifying the relationship of the Board of Directors and the Commission on Constitutional Matters], building upon Res. 7-02A of the 2004 convention, has given our Synod the opportunity to move forward now and leave behind some of the authority issues that have troubled us,” Hartwig said. “And certainly the Specific Ministry Pastor issue will have great consequence for our Synod. But the strong manner in which our convention addressed inspiration of Scripture and sanctity of life issues made me especially proud to be a member of this Synod. It is an amazing and beautiful thing how we are able to stand up and stand together on these most significant issues.”

For newly elected LWML president Jan Wendorf, who brought greetings to the convention, the Synod assembly is very



A highlight of the convention—prompting a sustained ovation—was the honoring of retired LCMS missionaries and missionary couples. Before the convention, LCMS World Mission brought together all active LCMS national and international missionaries for “Renewing Our Covenant—Rekindling Our Joy,” a weeklong *Ablaze!* missionary summit. A concurrent event, the “Missionary Alumni Reunion,” encouraged participants to renew friendships and share information. The two missionary groups met together July 13. The events marked the second time LCMS World Mission brought current and former missionaries together to share experiences and ideas. The first occasion was at the 2004 Synod convention.

Reflecting on Two Decades of Service

Among the many events noted by the convention, the retirement of Dr. Robert H. King from the Praesidium of the Synod merits a special word.



Dr. Robert H. King (*left*) acknowledges the thanks of the convention. With King is LCMS President Emeritus Ralph Bohlmann.



LWML President Jan Wendorf

different from a convention of the LWML.

“We’re not charged with doing the business of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod,” Wendorf said. “We’re an auxiliary with a very specific focus. Here there are seven or eight, or more, floor committees dealing with issues that are really important to our church body. It’s interesting to see the process. I have such an admiration for our leaders—our president, our vice-presidents, our district presidents, and our seminaries. It’s just amazing to see how they can work together and get things accomplished—and hopefully get our church healed and focused on that one mission of Christ.”

In the eyes of Southern Illinois District president Herbert Mueller, the 2007 convention was a step forward from 2004. In 2004, Mueller said he went home from the convention with “a sense of profound frustration.”

“I’m going home from this convention calm and collected,” Mueller said. “I’m not happy about everything, but I’m happy about most things.”

King, 85, served 21 years as a vice-president of Synod. Ordained in 1949, King calls his long tenure as a vice-president “the Lord’s doing—otherwise I would have never served 21 years.

“I feel that the Lord was using me for some special purpose,” King adds, “I don’t know what, but I certainly give Him all the honor and glory.”

King said he has worked with four LCMS presidents—Bohlmann, Barry, Kuhn, and Kieschnick—and he describes all of them as outstanding leaders in the church. “Even though some people may have their criticisms, I know that they wouldn’t have been in those offices had not the Lord called them,” King said.

For his long service to the church, Synod President Gerald B. Kieschnick presented King with a Waterford crystal cross that rests on a marble base.

— J.H.H.



Mueller

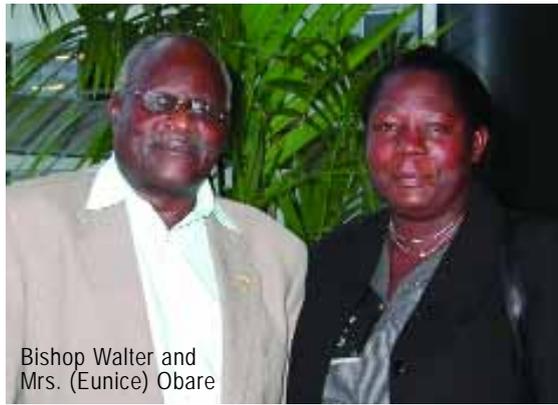
Mueller said he was particularly pleased with several resolutions, including the resolution establishing the Specific Ministry Pastor Program. "That's something a lot of people have

been talking about and working toward," Mueller said, "and I pray that it's something that's going to help our Synod address the need for pastors, especially in specialized situations, in a way that is faithful to our Confession and faithful to the Bible."

Mueller said he was also pleased with the prayer service at the beginning of the convention. It helped set the tone for the convention, he said.

"It was a tool used by God to help mold the delegates so that there was a higher level of churchmanship and a greater sense of cordiality than at previous conventions."

For Rev. Walter Obare, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, a partner church of the LCMS, the way the convention conducted its business merited notice.



Bishop Walter and Mrs. (Eunice) Obare

"It is peaceful, and it is well prepared," he said near the end of the convention. "And I am happy that as much as they continue to discuss so many other things, they try again and again to come back to the focal point of what makes the church be the church—the Gospel. And with that I'm impressed."

And so, at the end, the message is the same as at the beginning: *Christ!* His love is here for you—today!

For more information

A few thousand words do scant justice to the work of the 2007 LCMS convention. For more information, visit lcms.org and click on one of the convention links, or on the link for *Reporter Online*, which offers a more detailed look at the convention.

James Heine is the interim managing editor of *The Lutheran Witness*. The staff of the Board for Communication Services also contributed to this story.

Three Celebrations for the Quiet Season

by Gregory Wismar

In some ways August is the “quiet season” of the calendar by which we mark the passage of time. It is the only month that consistently has no major holidays listed among its 31 days. While there may not be special secular celebrations, our church-year calendar supplies us with three memorable festal days: the Day of Saint Mary, Mother of Our Lord on the 15th; the Day of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle, on the 24th; and the Day of the Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist on the 29th. The days of Saints Mary and Bartholomew have long histories in synodical listings of feasts and festivals; the Martyrdom of St. John the Baptist has been reintroduced in conjunction with the new *Lutheran Service Book*. An observance of these three ecclesiastical days can bring a sense of holy energy to this quiet corner of the year.

In a 1531 Christmas sermon on the birth of Jesus, Martin Luther stated: “It is true, Mary is praiseworthy and can never be lauded and extolled enough. For the honor of having been chosen from all the women on earth to be the mother of this Infant is exceedingly high and glorious” (*What Luther Says*, Page 1, 256). As the mother of our Lord, Mary serves as an example of selfless devotion and unconditional obedience to the will of God.

How does Mary describe herself in Luke 1:38?

How does she speak of her role in God’s plan for salvation? (Luke 1:49)

What is she doing the last time she is mentioned in the Bible? (Acts 1:14)

Although the Gospel accounts and the Book of Acts give us an extensive portrait of Saint Mary, there is very little written in the Bible about Saint Bartholomew. His name appears only when it is included on the lists of Jesus’ disciples supplied by the evangelists Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, and Saint Luke, and once in the Book of Acts.

With whom is his name “paired up” in Matt. 10:3 and Luke 6:14?

Where do we also find him in the Book of Acts? (1:13)

What event had he just witnessed in this account? (Acts 1:1–12)

Church tradition suggests that Bartholomew became an apostle immediately after the ascension of Jesus and brought the Gospel to Armenia, the first nation to embrace the Christian faith as a national religion. What promise did Jesus make to His disciples on the night He was betrayed? (Luke 22:24–30)

According to church tradition, Bartholomew’s life ended with his martyrdom. Many notable disciples’ lives ended in their being killed for their faith. Even the cousin of Jesus,



John the Baptist, met the end of his earthly life in this way. At whose instigation and in what way was John the Baptist martyred? (Mark 6:17–29)

How did Jesus describe John the Baptist and his witness? (John 5:35)

What great announcement was at the center of the proclamation of John the Baptist? (John 1:29–31)

What did Saint Paul recall about the message of John the Baptist? (Acts 13:24–25)

Each month the calendar of feasts and festivals (*Lutheran Service Book*, Page xi) supplies specific days that are designated for celebrating special people of God and their lives of faith. In this “quiet season,” start with observing the three feasts and festivals for August and begin to discover the riches to be found in such holy remembering!

Dr. Greg Wismar is pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church, Newtown, Conn., and chairman of Synod’s Commission on Worship.

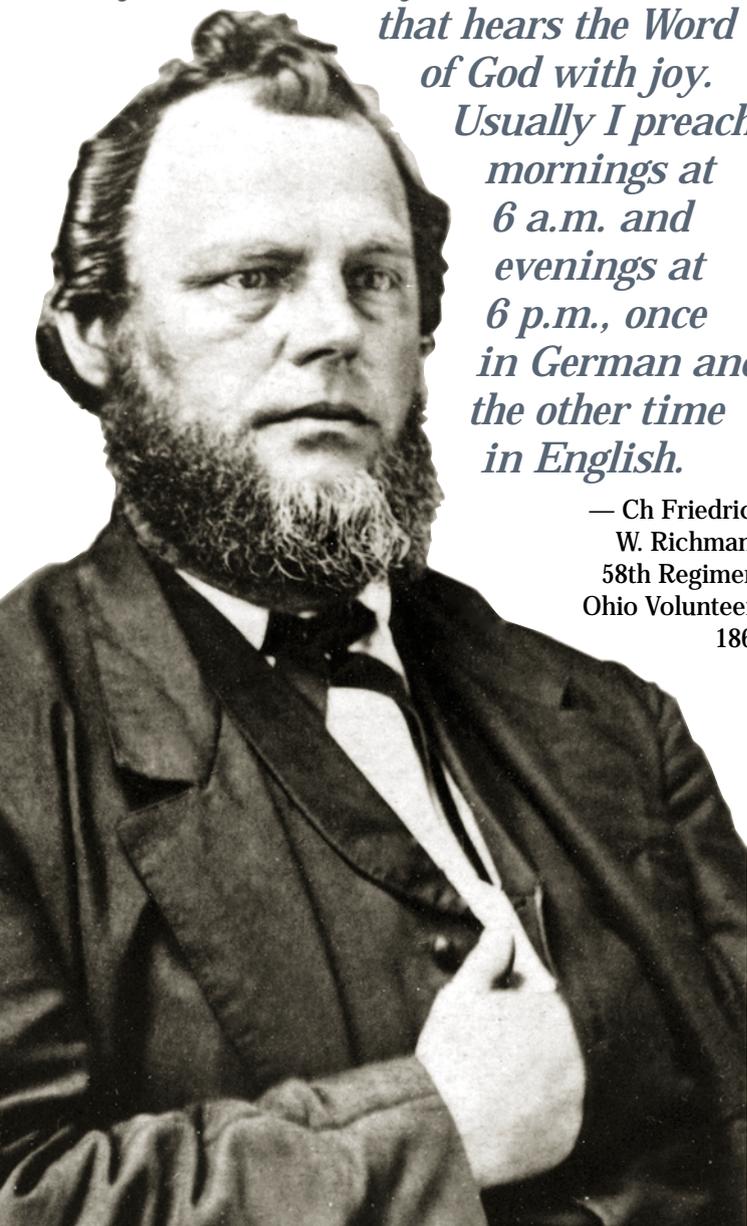
In the Shadow of Death ... Chaplains Speak of Life Eternal

by Roland Lovstad

It causes much trouble to assemble the individual companies of wounded soldiers for the services, yet there's always a small band that hears the Word of God with joy.

Usually I preach mornings at 6 a.m. and evenings at 6 p.m., once in German and the other time in English.

— Ch Friedrich
W. Richmann
58th Regiment
Ohio Volunteers
1862



Rev. Friedrich W. Richmann, the first LCMS chaplain.

War is hell, and no one can speak to it more articulately than a military chaplain who sees life and death through the lens of God's love and eternal protection in Jesus Christ.

Peacetime, too, can be a lesser hell for men and women serving in faraway lands or on distant seas, in dangerous skies, or even in another part of this country. Wherever he or she serves, a soldier is still a long way from home, from family, and from a Christian congregation.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a proud heritage of providing Christian witness and nurture to the soldiers and sailors who serve their country in war and peace. It's a tradition almost as old as the Synod, dating to the first chaplain, Rev. Friedrich Wilhelm Richmann, who ministered with the 58th Regiment of the Ohio Volunteers during the Civil War.

Appropriately, during this time of the war on terrorism, the ministry of LCMS military chaplains is documented in an exhibit at the Concordia Historical Institute (CHI), the archive of the Synod and U.S. Lutheranism. Opened in the fall of 2006, the exhibit is at the CHI building on the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and continues through the end of 2008.

Dr. Martin Noland, CHI director, says Dr. Mark Schreiber, a retired Navy chaplain and director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, proposed the exhibit.

"It was a blessing to us to work with a department of the Synod," Noland says. "We contributed our knowledge; our staff did the research."

The intent of the exhibit is to highlight the often difficult and arduous ministry provided by military chaplains, Schreiber explains. "We supplied documents and insights, while trying to represent the different services and ranks."

Among the holdings at CHI was the war diary of Richmann—"one of our treasures," says Noland—plus items from eras of American history. To fill out the exhibit, CHI and the Ministry to the Armed Forces contacted active and retired chaplains for their help. The result was an abundance of material, as chaplains contributed or lent pictures, uniforms, medals, field kits, and other items. Schreiber was even spurred to complete a model of an aircraft carrier on which he served so it could be part of the exhibit.



1946: Ch Henry F. Gerecke.



A copy of the LCMS' *Loyalty: Christ and Country* from August 1943. A monthly devotional publication of the LCMS Army and Navy Commission, *Loyalty: Christ and Country* was "an order for private worship with message." It was published from March 1941 to December 1987. The Army and Navy Commission eventually became the Ministry to the Armed Forces.

The exhibit reflects chaplaincies during the Civil War, Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict, Vietnam, Desert Storm and, now, the war on terrorism. Patrice Russo, CHI executive secretary and interim museum manager, assembled the exhibit.

"[Our chaplains have] touched people in unusual ways," Noland observes. "Chaplaincy is a mission opportunity for the Lutheran Church, and we have been able to make a significant contribution."

One example: the ministry of Ch Henry F. Gerecke, who served as chaplain to Germans who were tried

for war crimes at Nuremberg after World War II. Gerecke spoke German, and 15 of the 21 prisoners indicated a Protestant background. Excerpts of Gerecke's journals, on exhibit at CHI, tell of his regular rounds to the prisoners, of writing letters to their families, and accompanying them to their executions.

Another chaplain, Oscar Schoech, served from 1948 to 1950 among Japanese prisoners. He also had the duty of accompanying them, including two Christians, to their executions.

Chaplains are not directly assigned to combat, but their commitment to minister to "their men" often exposes them to danger. Ch Roger W. Heinz was killed in action in 1969. Others were wounded in action or cited for bravery.

Even in peacetime, chaplains can face rigorous duty. Ch Alfred R. Saeger served in Antarctica during 1957 and 1958. A photo in the CHI exhibit shows Ch Milton S. Ernstmeyer being lowered on a sling from a military helicopter to conduct services on a submarine at sea.

A number of well-known LCMS leaders served as chaplains. Dr. John W. Behnken, LCMS president from 1935 to 1962, and Dr. Walter A. Maier, Lutheran Hour speaker from 1930 to 1949, served as base chaplains early in their careers.

Arthur Carl Piepkorn, Martin Scharlemann, and Richard Klann served as chaplains before their service as professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Dr. Gerhardt W. Hyatt became a Major General and Army Chief of Chaplains during his service from 1945 to 1975, and in retirement headed the Synod's *Forward in Remembrance* campaign, served as president of Concordia College, St. Paul, and as a Synod vice president from 1981 to 1985.

Former chaplains have served in executive staff positions with the Synod, as executive editor of *The Lutheran Witness*, as seminary professors, and district presidents. Just as important, many are serving, or have served, as parish pastors.

July 1953: Ch H.C. Albrecht conducts a memorial service aboard the *U.S.S. Kearsarge*, honoring two men who lost their lives in the line of duty.



After seeing hundreds of dead men at once, my life changed forever. I stepped across some intangible line of experience that dims the importance of things I once considered indispensable. Others think you've changed; you know you have. Nothing really matters in death except immortal souls. I saw God looking down with compassion and love on humanity despite its transgressions.

— Ch Alvin Katt
Oahu, Hawaii, Dec. 7, 1941



June 1944: Ch O. David Herrmann uses a destroyed Japanese tank for an altar. A Navy chaplain, Herrmann was attached to a Marine unit on Saipan.

Heavenly Father, we are tired of digging. There are times when it seems hopeless because we'll only move again to start over again. So when we rest, give us rest. When we begin a new day, grant us vigor; when we dig in again, grant us physical strength and stamina. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

— Ch Jack Kirk
The Persian Gulf, 1991



Schoech



Piepkorn



Scharlemann



Above: Ch George Shaffer conducts a worship service in Iraq.

Left: Also in Iraq, Ch Gary Williams greets soldiers.

Far Left, top to bottom: The list of LCMS chaplains contains many familiar names, including Oscar Schoech, who served Japanese prisoners at the end of World War II; Arthur Carl Piepkorn; and Martin H. Scharlemann.



“LCMS clergy are highly regarded in the chaplaincy,” says Noland. “They understand discipline, respect separation of church and state, and are well-educated.”

The CHI exhibit includes information about Lutheran

For More Information

- About Concordia Historical Institute, visit <http://chi.lcms.org> or write to Concordia Historical Institute, 804 Seminary Place, St. Louis, MO 63105.
- About LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces, visit www.lcmsworldmission.org/armedforces or contact the office at 1333, S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122.

‘Ministry by Mail’

Ministry to the Armed Forces relies on Lutherans and their congregations to supply names and addresses of members in the military. Nancy Rowley, assistant to the MAF director, manages the “Ministry by Mail” program, which first sends devotional material and a Luther medallion for soldiers’ dog tags. Then quarterly mailings provide *Portals of Prayer* and the “So Help Me God” newsletter, edited by Ch Ted Wuerffel, MAF assistant director.

Send the address of your family member or congregation members who are on active duty to “Ministry by Mail,” 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122.

Seeking the Best Military Chaplaincy

In Iraq, Ch Richard Townes introduces himself to local children.



Service Centers, which were sponsored jointly by the National Lutheran Council Service Commission and the LCMS Army-Navy Commission. During World War II and the Korean War, they served as a “Lutheran USO.” Staffed by volunteers, the centers provided a place for servicemen and -women to gather for worship and recreation. They’re of special interest to Noland because his father, a Navy serviceman during the Korean War, met his mother, a volunteer, at a center in San Francisco.

According to current plans, a new CHI museum will open in fall 2008 at the LCMS International Center in Kirkwood, Mo. CHI will continue to offer special exhibits at its current building. The changes will also allow more archival space in the current building.

Roland Lovstad is a free-lance writer and a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Perryville, Mo.

*NOTE: With the exception of the quote from the 1991 Iraq war, the display quotes are from *The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, They Shall Not March Alone, a history of chaplaincy in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, collected and edited by Ch M.S. Ernstmeyer. Copyright © 1990 Concordia Publishing House.**

Professional counselor, staff officer, and headache-reliever for the commanding officer.” Those are just a few ways Dr. Mark Schreiber describes a military chaplain. Add to that advisor on marriage and children, comforter of the lonely and fearful, baptizer, worship leader, and conveyor of God’s love in Jesus Christ.

“As ordained pastors, chaplains conduct worship wherever they can pull people together—on the backs of trucks, fantails of ships, in the air,” says Schreiber, a retired Navy chaplain and director of the LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces (MAF). “But they also wear a second hat, as a trained staff officer to the commanding officer. They are a big resource and relied upon for professional advice.”

The Synod has 231 endorsed chaplains, including 75 full-time in the Army, Navy, and Air Force, plus 105 Reserve chaplains (15 now on active duty). Others serve in Veterans Administration hospitals, the Civil Air Patrol, and the Bureau of Federal Prisons.

By Department of Defense requirement, today’s chaplains must have two years of parish experience before entering the military.

“The chaplain is a pastor,” Schreiber emphasizes. “We seek to recruit, train, and support the best pastors to be chaplains.” The DOD also has physical and age requirements.

All chaplain candidates must receive MAF endorsement. The process includes evaluations from their district president, circuit counselor, and three other pastors. The Commission on Ministry to the Armed Forces interviews all candidates and endorses them for service. Once accepted, they choose a military branch and begin active or reserve duty as positions become available.

Chaplains receive basic training according to the branch they will serve. Upon entering the military, they could be in a combat zone within 12 months.

“Pray for our chaplains, asking God to provide them with the courage and strength to serve in a just and noble way,” Schreiber requests. “Combat can change perspectives—ugly things happen. Everyone has stress in a combat zone. The ministry of the Gospel to our men and women in uniform is the chaplain’s number-one priority. Pray that our chaplains stay focused on this priority as they seek to penetrate the military environment with the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus.”

Schreiber emphasizes that prayers for chaplains—and the soldiers they serve—need to continue beyond combat tours. “Life doesn’t simply return to normal once their tour is done,” he says.

The LCMS and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are developing a support system for chaplains and veterans, Schreiber says. The goal is a nationwide system of counselors—people who also experienced war—to ease re-entry to civilian life and to readjust to marriage, family, congregations, and civilian ministry.

“Prayer is always important, but it must be united with proactive ministry,” Schreiber adds.

— R.L.



From Maintenance to Mission

Ablaze!

A childcare ministry reignites a suburban congregation and creates new outreach opportunities in its community.

by Diane Strzelecki

Eleanor Pattie and her husband had been living in the Chicago suburb of Glenview about two years when she began looking at childcare resources for her infant daughter, Ula. Pattie became frustrated quickly, as there seemed to be waiting lists everywhere.

“I soon found out that in this area, you practically have to get on a waiting list when you first know you’re pregnant,” she says.

When Pattie began touring the few facilities with openings, she became discouraged by overcrowded and institutional conditions. “The kids were pretty packed in there,” she remembers. “I also noticed that most facilities were extremely regimented as far as eating, naps, and activities—probably due to the number of children enrolled. There was no individualized attention.”

In the fall of 2006, Pattie was driving past Immanuel Lutheran Church in Glenview when she noticed a large, colorful banner hanging on the church’s former school building. It read “Now Open: Open Arms Christian Child Development Center.” Several phone calls and tours later, the Patties decided Open Arms was the right place for their daughter. They became one of the first families to enroll a child in Immanuel’s new ministry.

Hard choices

For many years, it seemed that Immanuel was focused only on survival. Shifting demographics had led to a substantial decline in school enrollment and church membership. When the congregation called Rev. David Barber to be its pastor in 1999, the school—and by default, the church—was in financial crisis. In August 2003, the congregation voted to close the school.

“There was tremendous conflict over this decision,” Barber remembers. “The prevailing outlook was ‘If the school dies, the church dies.’ It was a very painful process.”

Faced with an empty but usable building on their property, Barber and church leaders examined potential ministries that could be housed by the 30,000-square-foot facility. Congregation president Tom Amato describes the process that began then as very organic. “We began asking ‘Who are we as a church?’ and ‘Who are we to serve?’” Amato says. Leaders carefully evaluated a United Way of Glenview survey that identified childcare as the most critical need in the community.



An Open Arms Christian Child Development Center has added a new dimension to the ministry of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Glenview, Ill. Above and right: At Open Arms, parents appreciate the intentionally Lutheran and family orientation of the childcare center, as well as the dedication of staff members such as preschool teacher Jumana Sweilem (above) and toddler assistant Viki Calovic (far right).

“Childcare began to make sense as a way to reach out to the community and let them know we can help,” Amato says.

“At that time, more two-career families with young children were moving into the area, and some of them were coming into the church,” Barber notes. “We started asking, ‘What can we do to make an impact on the lives of these families?’ Again, childcare fit into that calling.”



While pastor at Faith Lutheran in Merritt Island, Fla., Barber had visited the first Open Arms center in Alpharetta, Ga., a ministry of Ascension Lutheran Church in Atlanta. The success of Ascension's childcare center resulted in a church plant.

"Open Arms is a church-planting strategy that starts out by connecting to the community through providing childcare services," Barber notes. "In our case, we had the facility—we just needed a means of connecting with and serving the community."

Amato and other church leaders believed the Open Arms center would be an effective ministry for Immanuel—and it was consistent with the goals of Synod's *Ablaze!* movement.

"Open Arms will address the growing need for childcare among families in the Glenview area," Amato says. "It will offer us the opportunity to reach segments of the community that we could otherwise not reach, especially families with no recent connection to a Christian church."

They estimate that number at 15,000 households, Amato adds.

"The worst thing that can happen is for a congregation to turn inward," observes Dr. Robert Scudieri, associate director of LCMS World Mission. "Starting an Open Arms ministry impels a congregation to consider the needs of the people in their community."

But not everyone at Immanuel was excited about the idea. After Wendy Pritchard accepted the call to be Immanuel's Open Arms director and moved her family from Florida to Illinois, she faced some obstacles. Even though she received an official congregational welcome,

she encountered members who opposed the new ministry and weren't afraid to tell her so. Less than a year later, she has seen a remarkable shift in attitude.

"The members who didn't want the ministry at first have really come around and been helpful, positive, and supportive," Pritchard says.

An Immanuel member for four years, congregational secretary Carla Wehrspann is excited about what the ministry could mean for the church and the community. She recently joined the Open Arms board.

"The biggest change is that everyone has really come together for a common purpose, whereas before we were all going in different directions," Wehrspann

says. "There used to be a sort of friction between the long-term members and newer members. I really feel like we're all on the same path now."

A new perspective

Barber partially credits the shift in member mindset to the physical transformation of the church.

"The renovations we did to open the childcare ministry showed members a sign of life they hadn't seen in years," he says. "This ministry has created positive momentum—especially as more children and families

are coming to worship."

"Just having kids and families around helps a congregation wake up and realize the outreach opportunities right at their door," says

Rev. Scott Snow, director of outreach with LCMS World Mission. "It's hard for some congregations to go outside of themselves and reach into the community. An Open Arms ministry brings the community to the church."

As a parent sending her child to Open Arms, Pattie feels that Immanuel's selection of an outreach ministry was critical to the community. She appreciates being on the receiving end of the effort.

"The church involves the childcare families, sending them monthly newsletters and communicating on a regular basis," she says.

Pattie notes that every child attending Immanuel's Easter service received a basket, which included a tract on the story of Jesus and a brochure about Open Arms.

"The way they operate is a huge testimony to the church," she says.

Barber and the Open Arms staff are thrilled to see the faith community grow healthier each day. Pritchard continually encourages member involvement, even including shut-in members whenever she can. "We've asked them to fold brochures, stuff mailings, and put stamps on envelopes; they've made food for work parties," she says. "Although they are not here physically, they still feel like they are a contributing part of the church."

Scudieri notes congregational involvement and a talented, devoted core of leaders are critical to the

Church leaders believed the Open Arms center would be an effective ministry for Immanuel—and it was consistent with the goals of Synod's *Ablaze!* movement.



success of any Open Arms ministry. “A pastor can inspire the vision of the new ministry and share the Word of Christ that supports the ministry, but if the Word doesn’t take root in the heart of the people, it will not succeed,” he says.

“Starting up this ministry has been very rewarding—I don’t think I would have changed anything about the whole process,” notes Pritchard.

And the process wasn’t smooth. Permit and construction delays pushed the opening from fall 2006 to January 2007, a less-than-ideal time to take in children. Yet some parents were impressed enough with the church and the ministry that they pulled their children out of their current daycare arrangement to enroll them at Open Arms. Pattie even bypassed her employer’s less expensive on-site daycare.

“To us, it was worth an extra \$5,000 a year to avoid crowded conditions and get Christian care,” Pattie says.

Soon after Glenview resident Katie Boling began looking for childcare for her infant son, she received an Open Arms mailing. “It seemed like it would be a good fit for us. After I met Wendy and took a tour of the facility in November, I knew it was.”

Boling was fortunate that her employer was flexible enough to postpone her return from maternity leave to accommodate her choice of childcare. She says it was definitely worth the wait.

“Even among the area’s ‘premier’ daycare options, Immanuel’s Open Arms is nicer—more of a family environment,” Boling notes. “The outdoor play equipment is unbelievable; there are activities for all the children, and the teachers are wonderful.”

Debra Zara, also a parent with a child enrolled in Open

Arms, agrees. “The teachers are very open and friendly—they truly love those kids. I give Wendy a lot of credit for that. She has an incredible gift to recognize positive strengths in people.”

“This is exactly the kind of ministry we had hoped Open Arms could be,” Scudieri says.

Amato believes Open Arms has the potential to maintain the momentum created by *Ablaze!* “Open Arms will allow members



of the Immanuel community abundant opportunities to demonstrate meaningful Christian witness to the families we reach and the community at large.”

Interest in the ministry continues to grow. Pritchard fields inquiries every day and expects the trend to continue, driven in part by word-of-mouth recommendations. “Parents are hearing about the school from other parents—it’s a really neat trend,” she says.

Zara, now a member of the Open Arms board, is excited about what the ministry means for the congregation and the community.

“We’ve done this together as a congregation,” she says. “We’ve come a long way as far as getting more of our members involved and getting new people involved. We’ve built a good foundation for reaching out to families.”

Diane Strzelecki is a Chicago writer and a member of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Palatine, Ill.

Open Arms

Reaching out with the Gospel

The goal of the Open Arms Institute is simple: to encourage quality Lutheran childcare ministry in connection with new church planting or expanded Gospel outreach.

Ascension Lutheran Church in Atlanta, Ga., pastored by Rev. Philip Kuehnert, began the first Open Arms center in 1989. At the same time, it began a new mission, Christ the Shepherd in Alpharetta, Ga., with an Open Arms facility. More Open Arms centers followed, in Georgia and elsewhere.

Today, the Open Arms Institute holds semiannual conferences to encourage congregations considering this model. The LCMS Department of Child Ministry contributes to the content of the conferences; the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) provides expertise in finance, market analysis, and business-plan preparation.

“Open Arms is not just a childcare service, but an intentionally Christian Lutheran Gospel ministry,” says Dr. Robert Scudieri, associate director of LCMS World Mission. He adds that the Open Arms strategy can be successful in supporting the start of a new church, allowing existing churches to begin a satellite church, and, as in the case of Immanuel Lutheran in Glenview, Ill., revitalizing an existing congregation. But it needs to be an informed decision.

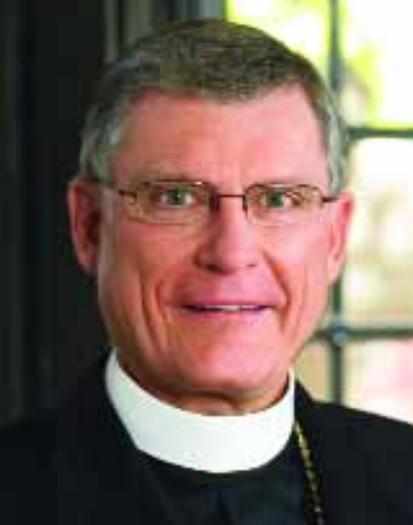
“A congregation considering Open Arms needs to conduct a market survey, develop a thorough business plan, and put together an informed budget in order to apply for an LCEF loan,” Scudieri says. “But most of all, the congregation needs to pray and seek guidance of the Spirit. If you don’t have that, the rest won’t fall into place.”

To learn more about the Open Arms Institute, visit www.openarmsinstitute.com or call 970-667-3249.

Top Five Open Arms recommendations for congregations

5. Understand the demographic makeup of your community—the true market-driven needs for childcare.
4. View the facility, staffing, and program through the community’s eyes.
3. Communicate, communicate, and communicate (with the congregation).
2. Encourage the use of members’ God-given (spiritual) gifts.
1. Keep ministry the focus at all times.

— D.S.



‘His Love Is Here for You’

The 2007 Synod convention, which just ended July 19, lived up to its theme: “One Message—*Christ!* His Love Is Here for You!”

Christ’s love was evident as delegates demonstrated their care—and the Synod’s care—for the spiritual, physical, and emotional well being of all people, and for each other.

The convention adopted a number of resolutions that advance our mission of reaching others with the Good News of Jesus and thanked the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League and Lutheran Hour Ministries, our two auxiliaries, for all they do to share Christ with others. Delegates also asked for a study on the natural knowledge that all people have of God. While such knowledge is not *saving* knowledge of God, it can be a starting place for our witness to the unreached and uncommitted.

Love for others also was shown in resolutions that addressed human-care needs. The delegates gave thanks for God’s care through our people over the past three years to the victims of such natural disasters as Hurricane Katrina and the tsunami in south Asia. They also adopted resolutions that address stem-cell research, foster care and adoptions, undocumented immigrants, domestic violence and child abuse, and people with disabilities.

While I don’t have room here to share details about these and many other important actions, you will find more detail in the report on the convention elsewhere in this issue of *The Lutheran Witness*. Even more detail is available online at www.lcms.org/convention.

Of all the LCMS conventions I have attended (every one since 1971), none has exceeded or even equaled the evangelical and fraternal spirit of this year’s gathering in Houston. The delegates carried on frank discussions, even of issues over which they disagreed, with mutual respect and trust toward each other and between them and the chair and the floor committees.

Many resolutions were adopted with 80- and 90-plus percent of the vote. This is an indication of a huge sense of solidarity among the delegates, even on very difficult issues. While some percentages weren’t quite that strong, it was rare to see something adopted by a slim majority. And, it is well worth noting that something as significant as a resolution that could lead to a special convention in 2009 received more than 70 percent of the votes.

The proposal for a special convention, which would be called to build a stronger structure and more streamlined governance for the Synod so that it can more

effectively carry out its mission and ministry, was the subject of considerable debate. In the end, however, the delegates directed me as president to meet with the Council of Presidents within 90 days—after consulting the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the Board of Directors, the vice president-finance/treasurer, other officers of the Synod, and the Commission on Constitutional Matters. If the district presidents and I determine at that time to call such a convention, the delegates told us that they “stand ready to serve.”

On several occasions at this year’s convention, there were emotional exchanges between delegates and floor-committee chairmen that were followed by repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. These were reported to the convention and greeted with Christian joy.

Of all the LCMS conventions I have attended, none has exceeded or even equaled the evangelical and fraternal spirit of this year’s gathering in Houston.

The tone of the convention was far more positive than some expected. This was a great convention that demonstrated a level of harmony and agreement that will go a long way toward deepening our Synod’s commitment for reaching lost people with the Gospel.

All this sets the stage, not only for a possible special convention in 2009, but also for the next regular convention in 2010. That convention will have a theme tied to the Synod’s three-part vision, as did the last two. In 2004, it was “ONE Mission: *Ablaze!*” This year, of course, it was “ONE Message—*Christ!*”

In 2010, it will be “ONE People—*????*” Do you have any suggestions for a word to complete the theme? I would love to hear from you if you do.

May our Lord continue to bless you and our beloved Synod as we carry out our ONE Mission of reaching lost people for Christ, doing so as ONE People united by God’s love, as we proclaim the ONE Message that Jesus Christ alone is the Savior of the world! We have ONE Message—*Christ!* His Love Is Here for You!

Lives Transformed through
Christ, in Time ... for Eternity!
e-mail: president@lcms.org
Web page: www.lcms.org/president

Jerry Kieschnick
John 3:16–17