

The Evangel

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Pentecost

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Pentecost—“Come Holy Spirit”

A Message from The Evangel Editor and
ALTS President, Rev. Richard Shields

Pentecost — “Come, Holy Spirit”

That invitation appears in the titles of many of our Pentecost hymns and songs. Have we prayed that the Holy Spirit comes to us as well? Are we ready for this prayer to be answered? This is not a simplistic call to experience one small aspect of the Spirit's work that often becomes nothing more than “personal experience” or worse, a “triumphalistic procession of my work.” Rather, this prayer is an invitation to be inhabited by and led by the Holy Spirit on a journey of faith that is far different.

The Holy Spirit will lead us to look only to Christ, when Christ seems least visible. We might be tempted to think that the Holy Spirit has forgotten us. The Holy Spirit-led faith is stripped of any pretense or showmanship. The Holy Spirit works in us in the trenches of life, where grime, sin, and mud get mixed in a confusing mess. That is why we know that the Spirit is working through the “ordinary means” such as the speaking of the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. “Come, Holy Spirit” as you have promised to come. Our lives, our work, our witness needs the Holy Spirit.

A Reflection on Worship Greetings

“The Peace of the Lord be with you.”

“And His peace be with you.”

Those words express the greetings that Christians in the early centuries extended to each other. They come from Jesus' greeting (John 20) to the disciples in the upper room. How appropriate that we continue this greeting in our worship services even today. In some of our congregations during worship, we may have time to extend that greeting to one another. Sadly, though, some use this time for other greetings: “What did you do last night?” or “When can we have coffee?” or “Did you hear about...?” If your congregation practices this greeting time, take time to reflect on exactly what is happening and why. Join Christians throughout the ages and extend Jesus' peace to one another.

New Features...

This issue includes a page called “Thinking about...” Quotes from a variety of authors will cause us to stop, ponder, reflect, and evaluate from a new perspective, both theological and personal. The first offering is quotes from two outstanding books: *Lutheran Theology* by Steve Paulson and *Hearing Jesus Speak into Your Sorrow* by Nancy Guthrie. Dr. Paulson invites us to examine the radical nature of the Reformation by taking us through Luther's lectures on Romans. What he unveils is more than interesting new facts, but an entire reorientation of confession of the faith. Be prepared to think! And enjoy the ride!

Mrs. Guthrie invites us on another journey, one of the heart in dealing with sorrow. As one who experienced deep sorrow, she found the only place of hope was to listen to Jesus speak to the sorrow. She turned to Scripture and didn't seek instantaneous aspirin for a headache but the deep, lasting promises of Jesus Christ and fulfilled in Christ. Be prepared to cry, but even better to be healed by the Great Physician of body and soul.



The Sermon on the Mount

A Message from TAALC Presiding Pastor, Rev. Franklin Hays

The Sermon on the Mount is the most cherished, most studied, most quoted sermon ever preached. But for all the attention given it, little attention is given to those who first heard it.

The crowds were comprised largely of outsiders. From Galilee came a lot of racially mixed, unorthodox Jews. From the Decapolis and settlements east of the Jordan River came a lot of Gentiles. Many in the crowds were those whom Jesus had healed. The diseased and infirm. The demonized and insane. The disabled and impoverished.

Hardly pillars of the community. They were more like its ruined remains. They were huddled around the town dump, hoveled away in caves, warming themselves at smoldering fires, foraging through trash for their next meal.

When these people heard about this miracle-working Jesus, they left their caves, their corners in the alley, their lean-tos at the city dump. When they arrive, the Savior does not flinch or recoil. He looks into their sunken eyes and cups His hands around the dimly burning wicks of their souls. He takes their palsied hands in His and steadies them. He touches their haggard faces and softens them. From His hands they receive healing. From His eyes, the hope to carry on.

No wonder these people followed Him so loyally. They were the dregs of society, yet He chose them to be the charter members of the community of faith. And singled them out to hear the greatest sermon ever preached.

What did they hear in His voice when He preached it? What did they see in His face?

We have no description of what Jesus looked like or sounded like. We don't know the color of His hair or how long it was. We don't know if He wore a beard or if He was clean-shaven. We don't know how tall He was or how much He weighed.

The closest description we have is the mosaic that Matthew inlaid in his gospel—the Beatitudes. The fragments, so intricately fitted together, form a composite of the character of Christ.

As we stare transfixed at this sublime work of art, the mosaic stares back, searching our soul. And, in a way only great art can, it speaks to us. Its still small voice whispers of all we are meant to be and all, by God's grace, we might become. The voice entices us to submit to the artist. But before we undertake to become the artist's work, we must understand the artist's way.

When the Father begins crafting in us what will endure, a crushing must first take place. Not because He's a temperamental artist who's angry with His work, but because the raw materials for His art work come from a broken heart.

The stony heart must be replaced. Perhaps by a blow by the hard circumstances of life, from the fist of an enemy, or sometimes from the hand of the artist Himself. But once the shattering takes place, it is His hand that reaches into our brokenness to pick up pieces. And piece by painstaking piece, He fits them together in such a way as to form the likeness of the Son He so dearly loves.

Here is what He looked like.



He was poor in spirit. Though He shared His Father's nature, He did not consider equality with Him something to cling to, but impoverished Himself, laying aside the robes of heaven for the rags of our humanity. He did so in order to serve us. And to show us what it means to be fully human.

He mourned. He was, in the words of the great prophet of exile, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Crying over the grave of a friend. Weeping over the fate of a nation. In His face we see brows furrowed by the hard plow of the world's pain. And beneath those brows, eyes brimming with heartache.

He was meek. Riding into Jerusalem on the back of a baby donkey. Stooping to shoulder the cares of the down and out. With the strength to speak out in defense of an adulterous woman. And the strength to remain silent when it came to defending Himself.

He hungered and thirsted for righteousness. So much so that in the wilderness He refused the loaves offered by Satan. And on the cross, the wine offered Him by the soldier. Instead, He wanted to be fed by the Father's hand, even if that meant forty days of stones or six hours of fevered thirst. His bread was to do the Father's will. His drink, the drink, the cup offered Him in Gethsemane.

He was merciful. He was moved with compassion on the crowds that flocked around Him like so many fearful sheep in desperate search of a shepherd. Wherever He went, He stretched out His hand. Gathering them to Himself. Nourishing them. Binding up their wounds.

He was pure in heart. Someone once said that purity of heart was to will one thing. That was Jesus' heart. It was so unalloyed from the basest metal of personal ambition, that Satan could damage nothing before Him to cause Him to defect from His Father.

[Continued on page 6]

ALTS: Today and Tomorrow

An Update from the American Lutheran Theological Seminary By ALTS President Rev. Rich Shields

Today we celebrate:

The past year has seen significant events in the life of ALTS. Rev. Dan Dapelo graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN in 2010, then was ordained and installed as pastor of First Lutheran and Lucky Mound Lutheran, Parshall, ND. In December 2010, Rev. Clyde Awtrey became the first to complete the Master of Theological Studies (MTS), distance seminary training. On April 10, 2011, he was ordained and installed as pastor of Mountain View Lutheran Church, Thornton CO. Rev. Scott Yount has graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and has accepted a call to Ascension, Waterloo, IA. He was ordained May 29, 2011, at St. Peter's, Elk Grove, CA. Well done to these men!

As part of our move into tomorrow, we have men at various stages of their seminary training. Michael Badenhop has been assigned his internship year (3rd year of seminary) at Good Shepherd, San Diego, beginning August 1, 2011. This will be a year of learning, growing, and reflecting on pastoral ministry. Under the guidance of Rev. Greg Stenzel, Michael will have a chance to experience most areas of pastoral service, putting into practice much of what he has learned in the first two years of seminary.

We also have several men who are working to complete the MTS program while serving as Rostered Licensed Lay Pastors (RLLP) in our congregations. Recently David Spotts completed his service at the dual parish of St. Paul (TAALC), Augusta, KY and Trinity (LCMS), Maysville, KY, and begins his service at Faith, Watseka. Dean Stoner has been serving as vicar/ intern at St. Paul's, Napoleon, OH while also taking MTS courses. Additionally several men have indicated strong interest in the MTS program.

Today leading to tomorrow

Because "times are changing" the above summary shows the evolving nature of our seminary work: on-campus studies and distance education are not in competition but complementary to meet the ministry needs of our church body. This dual focus allows us to continue to provide high quality seminary education regardless of the path taken. This also serves our congregations by expanding the number of men available for serving in the church.

The MTS professors use video conferencing to permit long distance seminary education so that we can simultaneously teach students in all four time zones. The response has been very positive both by professors and by participants. We have challenges to meet, such as increased financial support for those who teach and at the same time serve congregations. Each of our professors have advanced theological education beyond the seminary education (Ph.D. or STM). We also have schedule challenges, i.e., how many courses we can offer at any one time? But we are anticipating the future as the needs of the congregations and The AALC change.

In addition to the seminary curriculum, we are expanding our teaching to include Commissioned Church Worker (CCW) training to serve as Deacons, Deaconesses, Youth Workers, Directors of Christian Education, Lutheran School Teachers, etc. This will involve a combination of college and masters level Biblical studies to prepare them for such service in our congregations.

Tomorrow—Partnership in the Gospel Today

Yes, the plate is full, but this is what God has laid before us. This approach is neither simple nor easy, but I believe that we are moving in the right direction for the future of ALTS and correspondingly, for the future of The AALC. Thus, as we plan and prepare, I ask for your prayers and support.

As we address the needs for the future, I want you to know that you play an important role; we are in partnership in the Gospel. Since its inception, ALTS exists because congregations and leaders of The AALC have indicated the need for training pastors for serving in congregations. This long term perspective was and is necessary. The future of The AALC depends on pastors and people growing and serving.

Recruiting is crucial as we move forward. More than 50% of our pastors are between 50 and 70 years old. Thus, their service is coming to an end in the next decade or two. If we do not recruit men to serve today, we will face severe shortages with every coming year. Each of us can make a difference here. Who are the high school kids that are passionate, that you think should consider pastoral ministry as their vocation? Do you know college-aged men in the same category? What about middle-aged men who are great Bible study teachers that have leanings toward ministry? Let us know. Regardless of age, we can find a way to train them for pastoral ministry and service in our congregations.

Your financial support of ALTS is also necessary. The last 18 months have seen a change in giving; giving to the seminary by congregations and individuals has not kept pace with needs. You can make a difference! Consider giving special gifts to ALTS. Also, I encourage pastors and congregations to set aside two Sundays (appropriately Pentecost and Reformation) each year to raise awareness of the importance of ALTS and seminary training and to collect a special offering for the seminary. Now is the time for pastors and congregations to recommit themselves to supporting ALTS and its future work.

This is our partnership in the Gospel. Thank you for all that you have done in the past and are currently doing. As we move ahead, we do so together; we have established a viable road map for the future of pastoral and church worker training. May God richly bless all our efforts as we move forward in God's kingdom work.

Thoughts of Job, Redemption, and the Old Trinity Cross

by Deaconess Susan Scott

I know that my Redeemer lives! This wonderful Easter proclamation is said and heard by so many of us on Resurrection Sunday and the days thereafter. It is a marvelous statement! But many of us are not aware who penned these words. I'm sure some attribute it to a hymn writer, and certainly some glorious lyrics contain these words. Others may think one of the first to see Jesus as the Risen Christ shouted the message. Or perhaps the Apostle Paul included it in one of his letters to the first century church.

Actually, Job, the great sufferer spoke these words! Another interesting note is when he said it and where it is recorded in the book of Job. Job is 42 chapters long and mostly contains dialogue between God and Satan, Job and his friends, and Job and God. Because God allowed Satan to strip Job of his wealth, livelihood, even his 10 children, and his health, poor Job ends up in a bad way. It looks as if he may also have had to sustain a bad marriage! However, God calls Job his blameless and upright servant and eventually restores him and doubles his former blessings. Parenthetically, Job has 10 more children thus giving him 10 on earth and 10 in heaven... I think that's how the kid part is doubled! Job's proclamation does not happen at the end of the story when this restoration occurs. Job's famous words are recorded in the middle of the book... in Job 19:25. Amazing! Job knows that his Redeemer lives smack-dab in the middle of his plight! Perhaps there is a message for us here!

At Trinity, San Pedro, California we are tying the redemption message to a very special event. In October 2009, we had to remove a 30 foot wooden cross which hung outside our sanctuary for 50 years. My father-in-law, long-time member, Bob Scott, picked out every piece of wood, and his construction company built and installed it. Of course, moth and rust corrupt... as well as lots of California termites! Thankfully, members Anna May and Ed Kise had the forethought to salvage pieces of the old cross. They made a connection with Ron Hofsteter, a woodworker who is part of the Trinity family even though he presently resides in Arizona. Ron has crafted several dozen smaller crosses out of the re-claimed wood. Each is a very special work of art.

Trinity celebrates a 90th anniversary this year! These beautiful crosses are being auctioned to help us curb the costs of our upcoming party... to be held on October 23. I had the privilege of sharing the Job message on the same day we opened the auction, an ongoing event. We had not planned it that way, but as the day developed it became clear that our gracious Lord was bringing His Word of redemption to us. Another member had even placed a pot of beautifully blooming amaryllis in the sanctuary, a pot of bulbs which she had completely ignored. And the "frosting on the cake" was our youth band known as "Redeemed on 6th and Broadway" teaching the congregation a new song "Beautiful Things" by Gungor. "You make beautiful things out of the dust...out of us..." Sawdust in one case and so many other beautiful things out of us...and only because our Redeemer lives!



On March 20, 2011, Rev. Greg Stenzel installed Rev. Jon Kibler-McCabe as pastor of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Galt, CA.

Back row, left to right:

Rev. Ed Kok, United, Manteca; Rev. Steve Lundblom, St. Peter's, Elk Grove; Rev. Jason Bredeson, Trinity, Sacramento (LCMS); Jimmy Hollingsworth, Elder, First Baptist, Galt; Rev. Larry Groves, First Baptist, Galt; Rev. Hank Scherer, St. Paul, Woodland (LCMS); Rev. Rick Keiser, Family Life Christian, Galt

Front row, left to right:

Rev. Walt Tietjen (LCMS); Rev. Rich Eddy, St. Peter's, Elk Grove; Rev. Greg Stenzel, Good Shepherd, San Diego and AALC Regional Pastor, Western Region; Rev. Jon Kibler-McCabe, Shepherd of the Valley, Galt; Rev. Darrel Deuel, The Sending Place, Elk Grove; Rev. Paul Johnson, Our Saviour's, Patterson



RECENT EVENTS IN TAALC

Rev. Richard Shields ordained and installed Rev. Clyde Awtrey as pastor of Mountain View Lutheran, Thornton, CO on April 10, 2011.

Front row, left to right: Deaconess Kathy Awtrey, Pastor Don Ginkel, Pastor Clyde Awtrey, and Pastor Phil Hofinga.

Back row: Pastor David Schneider (LCMS), Vicar Mike Wnorowski (LCMS), Pastor Rich Shields, and Pastor Craig Henningfield (LCMS).

Not pictured: Pastor David Feeder (LCMS), and Deacon Mike Stuhr (LCMS).



Presiding Pastor

[Continued from page 3]

He was a peacemaker. He came to earth to reconcile a prodigal world to the Father's love.

And for all this goodness, all this kindness, what did Jesus receive? A pat on the back? A plaque of recognition? A parade in His honor? Persecution, that's what.

And if the world persecuted Him, what would it do to His followers?

If that's the road Christ takes us down, why walk down it in the first place?

Because persecution is not the end of the road. At the end—beyond the sight of our eyes, a few steps ahead of our logic, past our wildest dreams—lies a majestic kingdom, brimming with blessings:

Comfort from the sadness we've carried in our hearts.

An inheritance that staggers the imagination.

A feast to satisfy every inner longing.

Mercy to salve every wound we've encountered along the way.

And, most exciting of all, the embrace of the Father welcoming His children home.

These are the benefits of our relationship with Christ. Freely extended to that motley crowd who first heard them. From a hand that reaches through the centuries to extend them to us as well. Blessings that should not only give us hope for the road ahead...but happiness here and now so we can enjoy the trip.

Pastors' Retreat

This year's theme:

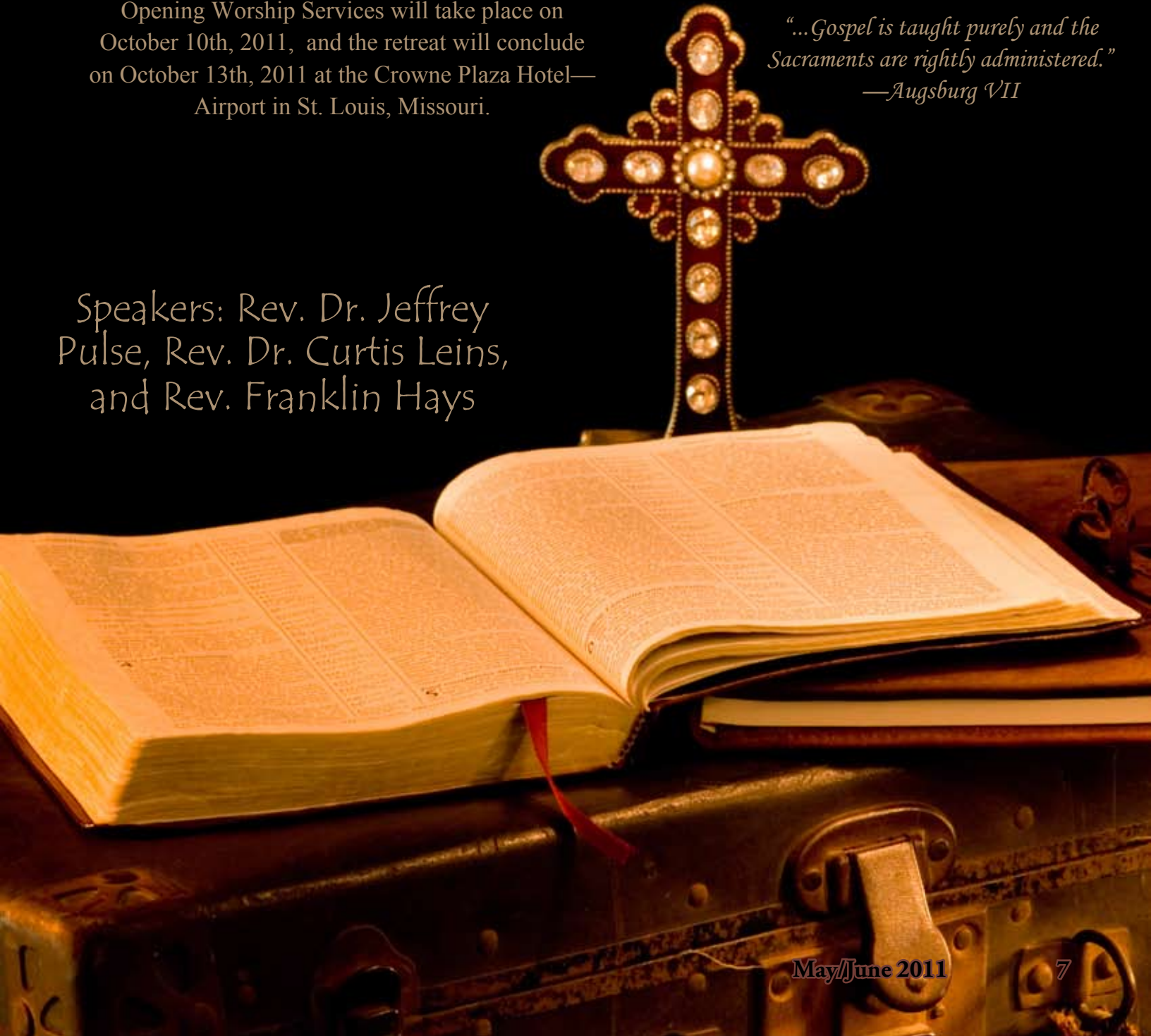
THE WORD: FROM TEXT TO TABLE

*The Annual TAALC Pastors'
Retreat is coming again this fall!*

Opening Worship Services will take place on
October 10th, 2011, and the retreat will conclude
on October 13th, 2011 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel—
Airport in St. Louis, Missouri.

*"...Gospel is taught purely and the
Sacraments are rightly administered."
—Augsburg VII*

Speakers: Rev. Dr. Jeffrey
Pulse, Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins,
and Rev. Franklin Hays





“Altitude With Attitude”

TAALC Youth Gathering 2011

Itake this opportunity to tell you about one of the most exciting opportunities sponsored by our national church body. It's the National Youth Conference! Every two years high school students (those entering 9th grade up to those exiting 12th) from across the country gather for a Rocky Mountain **Spiritual** High at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, CO.

The dates for this year's conference are July 18-22 and the program is going to be top-notch. We will be gathering this year under the theme: “Altitude With Attitude.” Our speaker this year, back by popular demand, is Rev. Bill Yonker. Bill serves as a pastor near Chicago by day and a passion-filled, “I can't believe he just held 250 students' attention for 50 minutes” youth speaker by night. He knows how to grab kids' attention and deliver to them the message of God's grace and forgiveness and challenge them to make a difference in the world in which they live.

One of the staples to our national youth conference has been a pair of brothers who are known as “Swen and Dean.” These two can get kids doing things that others would have never thought possible. It's singing, mixers, humor and a little bit of aerobics all rolled into one. The Lampost Theatre out of Cedar Falls, IA will be there as well. Their drama and technical presentations set up the speaker and drive home the points. Brad Longstreth, from St. Peters in Elk Grove, CA, will be heading up the worship team that helps participants express their praise to almighty God as God is at work ministering to each person's needs.

In addition to the program we have planned there will also be free time that affords the students the opportunity to utilize the miniature golf course, the pool, climb the mountains, visit the craft shop, play some basketball, and go white-water rafting and any number of other activities.

I hope that if you have students in your church eligible for this event you will make every effort to have them go. They will have an absolute blast plus grow in their relationship with Christ at the same time. All of the information for the youth conference and the forms to download can be found on the web at: www.taalcyouth.org. I hope that some from your church will be able to participate in an event that has changed many kid's lives throughout the years.

See you in the Rockies!

Pastor Roger Twito
Pastoral Advisor to the Youth Commission

The Sending Place

Cambodia Mission Team in Action

In January, a team of 5 went to Battambang, Cambodia, where they led a variety of conferences at Trinity Lutheran Church there, doing some outstanding teaching, and also worked with Transform Asia. Members of the team were Pastor Dan Deuel, Debra Johnson, John and Elizabeth Moreno and Catherine Pauley, all from St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Stockton, CA.



India Mission Team in Action

Also in January, a team of 6 went to Chennai, India, where they worked through Sowers Ministry and sang and preached the Gospel to many schools. They touched the lives of over 15,000 young people. Members of the team were Lynne Haas, Julie Stewart and Cindy Woodrum from St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Elk Grove, CA; Bonnadette Gaitan and Marjorie Vetrano-Maciel from St. Pauls Lutheran Church in Tracy, CA; and Carol Horner from Faith Lutheran Church in Fair Oaks, CA.



Ghana Mission Team in Action

A team of 8 went in January, this one to Ghana, where the King James Foundation kept them very busy preaching and teaching every day. They went to schools, even a large Muslim School, led Conferences, and even were able to speak over the radio for hours! Members of the team were: Jamie Eisenbeisz and Candace Deuel from St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Elk Grove, CA; and Miriam Deuel, Ann Marie Rehbein, Carol Sherman, Carolyn Wimple, Elizabeth Wilson and Kristin Winter from St. Andrews Lutheran Church in Stockton, CA.



Thinking about...

Here are a few quotes that will cause us to pause, think, and reflect...

Paulson, Steve. *Lutheran Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011)

Paulson will challenge much of what we think about Lutheran theology. He reflects Luther's study of Paul in the letter to the Romans. I have provided a few quotes to begin our thinking.

Lutheran theology begins perversely by advocating the destruction of all that is good, right, and beautiful in human life. It attacks the lowest and the highest goals of life, especially morality, no matter how sincere are its practitioners. (p. 1)

The first task of theology is to witness to sin and make it great, so great that it kills. (p. 1)

The second task of theology is to make way for the declaration of a completely foreign, new righteousness that has no law at all—"we must be taught a righteousness that comes completely from the outside and is foreign. And therefore our own righteousness that is born in us must first be plucked up" [*Luther's Work*, vol. 25: Romans, p. 136] (p. 2)

This is already no ordinary philosophy about life, nor is it ordinary Christian religion. For thousands of years Christians routinely described life using an allegory of the Hebrew exodus from Egypt. They said life in general, and Christians in particular, were on an exodus out of vice into virtue. They were on a journey away from badness toward goodness. But Luther bluntly said faith is not a transition from vice to virtue, it is "the way from virtue to the grace of Christ." [LW, 25: 137] (p. 2)

This sample from the first two pages catches our attention, and through it Paulson takes the reader on a journey with Luther through Paul's letter to the Romans. Note that it isn't Paulson who is radical, but Luther who is radical; Paulson directs us to that fundamental change, not just reforming the church in a few areas.

This book is well worth your time.

Guthrie, Nancy. *Hearing Jesus Speak into Your Sorrow*. Wheaton, IL Tyndale House Publishers, 2009.

Do you ever find yourself at times when words fail? Suffering and sorrow move front and center in this discussion. Nancy Guthrie is familiar with both, and she offers a book that is more than self-help or "toughen up strategy." Rather, she invites the reader to listen to Jesus speak into your sorrow.

Our daughter's (Hope) life was marked by days rather than years; she lived 199 days. (pp. xiii)

Honestly I had not known much sorrow in my life before Hope introduced me to it. And one might think that in loving and losing her, I, along with my husband, David, and my son, Matt, had received our full share. But only two and a half years later we buried her brother Gabriel, who was born with the same metabolic disorder as his sister had and lived a mere 183 days. (pp. xiii-xiv)

Nancy's pastor spoke about John 6 at the grave side, reflecting on Jesus' question ("Are you also going to leave?") and Peter's response ("Where else would we go?"). She continues,

As my pastor read the Scripture, I could relate to those in the story who found some of Jesus' words difficult to understand and accept, and simply walked away. Perhaps you can too, as you have struggled to reconcile your understanding of what you've read about in the Bible, and your expectations of how God cares for those he loves, with your own difficult reality. (p. xv)

Then Guthrie offers this invitation:

I don't know what has brought sorrow into your life. Maybe you, too, have stood by a grave and said good-bye. Or maybe you have to bury your dreams for a future with someone you love or your plans for doing something you have longed to do. Perhaps circumstances have forced you to leave behind a position you thought you were made for or come to terms with a frightening financial problem or a painful medical condition. Perhaps you live with ongoing sorrow over a child who has turned away from you or from faith. Maybe you are living with regret over the sorrow brought into your life by your own bad choices, or maybe you are living with resentment over the sorrow brought into your life by what someone else has done. Whatever the source of your sorrow, I wonder if you would be willing to spend a few quiet hours with me, listening to hear Jesus speak into it. (p. xvi)

As one who has followed that invitation, I urge you to accept that same invitation. Take your time, reflect, learn, and listen to our Savior.

Project Timothy—Bakari's Story

Dear Fellow Redeemed in Christ, Partners in Mission,

Jesus lives! Paul writes: "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). So today, the powers of darkness must tremble before Him. Read on!

Matongo, 28 April 2011. Meet Bakari (last name withheld on request) from Mombasa, the 2nd largest city in Kenya. Located on the seacoast, it has a large Muslim population. Bakari comes from a Muslim clan, and his uncle was a sheikh in a local mosque. Bakari's father was a polygamist, with 21 wives. At his birth, his mother contracted a serious illness and could not be healed by the witch doctors in whose custody his father had left her. A Christian woman met her and witnessed to her. After her conversion, a pastor prayed for her and she was healed. Later, the Lord protected her, when her husband was about to murder her, as witnessed by the family. As a result, Bakari and his younger brothers "really desired to know this God called Christ."

In high school, an American math teacher, Jerry MacDonald, would reward good students like Bakari with a sweet, which he would often present saying, "As sweet as the love of Christ." Bakari writes: "I really wondered and thought of this Christ, how He is like and where He is found. I was seriously missing love and peace in my life. I was restless." He was soon converted but suffered isolation, lack of food, beaten for no reason and mocked as a blasphemer in the community.

In September of 1993, his father and eldest brother, in Bakari's words, "decided to offer me to jinns as a sacrifice in Tanzania, at a place called SIMBA WANGA, well known for such practices. Normally, the witch/magician would consult spirit/jinns to summon your spirit to appear in a mirror at the time of sacrificing the desired person; and, regardless of where he is, the person would truly die. But in my case, when my spirit was summoned, the image of Jesus Christ appeared and destroyed the powers and charms of the witch. When Daddy and brother came back home, they asked me, 'Is this Jesus of yours alive?' They told me they had seen Christ and He is so powerful and cannot be conquered by evil powers. This reminded me of the book of Daniel."

In June of 1997, Bakari took some visiting missionaries to a mosque service, as arranged with the sheikh. But at the service,



Bakari

some 30 began to riot and seized him. They stripped him and threw a tire around him to burn him alive. The uproar grew: "Kill him! Kill!" An elderly man ran to his rescue. "Here God gave me the boldness and I said to them, 'What is wrong with a Christian coming to the right worship place at the mosque? If a sinner decides to become a Muslim by attending the mosque, he is doing the right thing and you should give him or her a welcome. Why do you want to kill me?' At this they left me for they felt guilty, no one uttered a word. The old man who had come to rescue me led me out of the compound and said to me, 'You are trusting in Christ the God of the Christians. He is strong and powerful. Continue believing in Him. You will be a teacher of the faith.' So I praised God again and continued to trust in the Lord Christ my Savior and my God."

Bakari received the Evangelist Training Course at Matongo between 1998 and 2000. Since August, he has been studying here again for the Diploma in Theology, to enter one day into the ordained ministry.

"I pray to God that He may open the door for me to pursue Islamic studies so that I would reach my brother Muslims with the Good News, the Gospel of the risen Christ." Amazingly, in fact, he has been invited to tell about Christ in a different mosque back home!

One never knows where God will send. The pastors and deaconesses trained here today may one day, by the providence of a gracious God, be missionaries to their own people or even to an apostate land in the global North or West. I want to continue training such men as Bakari, that their calling from the Lord to bring the sweet love of Christ to the nations, including the Muslim world, may be fulfilled.

The quote of the month: "Thus the critical matter is not whether God is faithful and righteous, but what kind of God He is—a God of Law or a God of Gospel. One could, theoretically, know the orthodox formulae about the Triune God but, failing to hear that God is for us (pro nobis), believe nonetheless that the Holy Trinity is a God of Law, an exacting taskmaster, and that Jesus will return on the Last Day to be a harsh judge only." (Jonathan F. Grothe, *The Justification of the Ungodly: An Interpretation of Romans*, I:56, fn. 18.)

Your brother in Christ,
Rev. Thomas V. Aadland

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2

This issue and previous issues of this newsletter, as well as information on how to donate, are available at www.projecttimothy-kenya.org.

East European Missions Network

Dear TAALC friends of EEMN,

Thanks for your ongoing support of **EEMN** as we rebuild and equip the Body of Christ in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. There is a lot of news to share! EEMN continues to grow, with more missionaries and new church planting partnership opportunities. We have five new missionaries going out fulltime this year, including **Rev. Andy & Monica Coyle** to Petrodolina, Ukraine as we undertake opening another new Bible school. Also, **Rev. Scott & Cecilia Ryll** (pictured here) are from LCMS, and will be going under EEMN to serve in Budapest, Hungary. They are joining our family of long term missions, international partner ministries, special projects. We also have **90 people serving on short term mission** teams this summer and fall. In each of these there is a broad range of fruitful possibilities for personal, congregational involvement and support.



Also, on March 1 EEMN merged with **Northwoods Ministry to Petrozavodsk (NWMP)**, the parent ministry of the **Christian Center at Lyceum #1**. We have worked closely with the Christian Center in our Friendship English Language Camps for the past 15 years, and are nearing the opening of a new Christian camp ministry under EEMN and the Center, too.

The family of Rev. Scott & Cecilia Ryll, who will be serving in Budapest, Hungary.

We are working closely with the **Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia (ELCIR)** to assist with strengthening the churches. In particular we are looking for a few churches willing to partner with an exciting and strategic new church plant in **Vladikavkaz** in southern Russia near Georgia. In the north Ossetia region, this church is very near the site of the Beslan school massacre that took place in 2004.

For more information about Rev. Scott & Cecilia Ryll, the church planting projects, or other ways to connect fruitfully with EEMN, visit www.eemn.org or call 505-990-1639.

Thanks for your prayers and support as we reach out in obedience to the Great Commission!

In the love of Christ,
Rev. Bill Moberly, Director
East European Missions Network

Apostles Creed

() I believe in God, the Father Almighty, () Maker of heaven and earth,
() and in Jesus Christ, His only Son,
() our Lord, () who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, () born of the virgin Mary,
() suffered under Pontius Pilate, () was crucified, () died, () and was buried.
() He descended into hell. () On the third day He rose again from the dead.
() He ascended into heaven, () and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.
() From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.
() I believe in the Holy Spirit, () the Holy Christian Church, () the communion of saints,
() the forgiveness of sins, () the resurrection of the body, () and the life everlasting. Amen.

Bible Passages

- 1) **Luke 24:51** Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.
- 2) **Luke 2:7** And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes ...
- 3) **Matthew 16:18** [Jesus said:] “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”
- 4) **Genesis 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- 5) **Ephesians 1:7** In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.
- 6) **John 6:47** [Jesus said:] “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”
- 7) **Ephesians 1:20–23** which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
- 8) **Acts 10:40** [Peter said:] “Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,
- 9) **Matthew 1:20** But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”
- 10) **Malachi 2:10** Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?
- 11) **John 5:28–29** [Jesus said:] “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”
- 12) **John 19:1** So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him.
- 13) **John 19:16** Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.
- 14) **John 19:30** So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.
- 15) **Mark 15:46** Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.
- 16) **John 1:18** No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.
- 17) **John 20:28** And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”
- 18) **Acts 17:31** “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”
- 19) **1 Corinthians 2:10** But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.
- 20) **1 Peter 3:19** by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison
- 21) **Ephesians 2:19** Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

*Women of L.I.F.E.
Lutherans In Fellowship and Evangelism*

Good Friday?

I am always torn with conflict at Easter. It is a time of TRUE JOY and CELEBRATION to be sure, but before I can get there, I must always remember what happened previously. And this is what haunts, humbles and convicts me. The thought of what Jesus went through on the cross for me. Good Friday was good for us, but it sure was not for Him.

Thinking of what He endured breaks my heart. It is not just the carnage, suffering and torture in our Lord's last day that haunts me but the whole Passion Week. Starting with the pleading in the Garden, and the total obedience "Your will Father not mine." The self control in allowing and even performing a miracle in the replacing of the soldier's ear while He himself was taken prisoner, with full knowledge of what was coming. The complete abandonment of His beloved apostles, His best friends whom He had loved, laughed and cried with for the last three years. And the knowledge of what His mother was about to witness. No son would wish that for his mother.

Let us not forget the scorn, mocking and hatred heaped upon our King's shoulders. Total and ultimate public disgrace and humiliation. All the while battered, bleeding and abandoned. And at any moment, any second, He could have chosen to stop it all. It was not the nails that held Him to that cross. And then worst of all, that moment when our Lord felt abandoned by His own Father, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" For in that single moment when Christ took on ALL the sin of the world, God could not be present, for God cannot be where sin is. I cannot comprehend His devastation. He did not just die for us...He completely, emotionally, physically, and mentally annihilated Himself for us. Remember-fully God, BUT FULLY HUMAN TOO. HE FELT IT ALL.

There are a few people I would die for. I would take a bullet, jump in front of a car or train, to shove them out of the way, sort of a knee jerk reaction. I would do that. But even if I wanted to, even for my very own two sons, I would not endure what Christ did for us. At some point I would yell STOP! I would not want to, but the reality is-it could not be endured. His was not a quick death, a neat or noble death. It was dirty, ugly and disgusting and defies understanding. Yet even then, "Forgive them Father, they know not what they do."

So, as we celebrate Easter, the resurrection, the defeat of death and sin and enjoy our families, let us not just think of Christ in brilliant white robes with light radiating from His face with only the nail marks in His hands as a reminder of the cross, but let us always remember the crown of thorns that came before that crown of glory. Let us always remember that He bought us with His very life. Then....we are truly free to celebrate the victory!! It is with this knowledge that we then may walk renewed.

Loree Bieker
WOL Co-Chair

Dear sisters in Christ,

Thank you for remembering the WOL budget which supports The AALC and several mission projects. Please continue to send your offerings to Marsha Benson, 1714 6th Street West, Williston, ND 58801-4512. We have some of Laurie Dapelo's Bible Studies and Leader's Guides left. We have even heard that there's at least one men's group using Laurie's Bible Study! Order from Bonnie Kay Ohlrich, 9652 County Road U, Liberty Center, OH 43532.

Again, we want to encourage you to walk closer with God by being in His Word daily and become a part of a Bible study group.

In Christ's Easter Love,
Kathy Buhr
WOL Co-Chair

Evangelism Commission

We continue the series of articles from pastors and congregations about their involvement in evangelism. Part of the responsibilities of the Evangelism Commission is to encourage all congregations of The AALC to find ways to fulfill the Great Commission and reach out with the Good News of Jesus Christ to the communities around them. Our goal is to help the congregations find ways to pursue this outreach. Clearly as The AALC has a wide range of different congregations, from congregations in the East to the West, from rural to city and suburban congregations, etc. evangelistic approaches will differ widely. In this issue Pastor Leins addresses a critical topic for our congregations, whether in a rural or suburban or urban setting. This is directly related to the church maturing, growing, and reaching out with the Good News.

The Importance of Men

By Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

It is important for the church to reexamine the role men play in spiritual formation and Christian life. This role is often abdicated or at least under-valued. Surely, it is not my intention to minimize the extraordinary role that women play with regard to faith and spirituality in the home and the Church. However, we need to find a way to recapture the role men have Biblically and historically played in the church.

In January of this year, Mark Gungor published an article stating,

In no other major religion do we see this (viz. a significantly greater percentage of women attendees than men) but for Western Christianity. You don't see it in Islam, Judaism or Buddhism – it's exclusively our problem that men pull back or refuse to get involved in any significant capacity in our churches.

Gungor suggests that the 21st century Western Church must do a better job of attracting and actively involving men in their congregations. He goes on to suggest that men have an important role to play as spiritual leaders in their homes and congregations. When men do not play that role, there are significant negative consequences in both the family and the congregation.

Three recent surveys share the same message:

- A study published by the Swiss Government showed that "...it is the religious practice of the father of the family that, above all, determines the future church attendance of the children." If a mother attends and NOT the father, 2% of their children will end up attending church regularly. If a father attends and NOT the mother, 44% of their children will end up attending church regularly.
- The Baptist Press showed another statistic: If the mother is the first to become a Christian in a household, there is a 17% probability that everyone in the household will follow. If the father is the first to become a Christian in a household, there is a 93% probability that everyone in the household will follow.
- A study by MSNBC simply stated, "...teenagers whose fathers are more involved in their lives are less likely to engage in risky sexual activities such as unprotected intercourse. While an involved mother can also help stave off a teen's sexual activity, dads have twice the influence."

The makeup of most Christian Churches in America is at least 60% women and less than 40% men. The allocation of funds for most church budgets provides a significant budget line item for the children and youth and another for the ministry to women, while men's ministries are an afterthought or a non-item. Again, this is in no way meant to diminish the value and importance of women's or children's ministries. It is, however, intended to provoke honest and innovative thinking regarding the importance of ministry to men and the priority that each congregation should rightly place on attracting, integrating, involving, and energizing their men.

Attention to men's ministries will bring strength and stability to our homes as well as vitality and increased attendance to our churches. How can your congregation invite and involve more of your men? How can your men be assisted in inviting and involving other men whose families are currently unchurched? How can men be equipped for leadership in the church? These are extremely important questions to ask. The answers could change the lives of your men, their families, your congregation, and your whole community.

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