

# The Lutheran WITNESS

MARCH 2003

VOL. 122 NO. 3

## Reflecting on Columbia

Also:

*What Kind of Pastor Do You Want?  
A Time to See Jesus*



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# The LUTHERAN WITNESS

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

MARCH 2003

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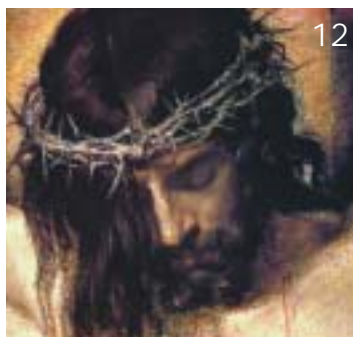
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## Just war

As one who has witnessed the horror of the scourge of war, I underscore Dr. Johnson's closing exhortation: Pray for peace!

*Rev. Skip Vogel  
Spring Valley, Minn.*

DR. JOHN F. JOHNSON'S ARTICLE, "CAN War Be Just?" (Jan. '03), was excellent. Before we enter any conflict, we need to wrestle with the opaque question as best we are able: Are we defending, even promoting, the rights and privileges we are afforded by the Constitution as citizens of the United States, or are we defending and promoting the rights and principles the Holy Scripture have endowed upon us as citizens of the Kingdom of God?

An "American" and a "Christian" are not the perfectly synonymous, nor the perfectly distinguishable entities we wish them to be.

*Rev. Mark Goble  
Memphis, Tenn.*

AT THIS CRITICAL TIME IN OUR NATION'S history, we need LCMS leaders who will have the moral courage to take an unambiguous stand against a preemptive war with Iraq or any other country.

In 1963, I joined other Lutherans in the March on Washington to show support for civil rights. We marched alongside our district president, who became for us a model of moral Lutheran leadership at a critically important time. Where are our LCMS leaders today when our country so desperately needs to hear their voice in opposing an unjust war that may be about to begin?

*Robert C. Droege  
Hyattsville, Md.*

DR. JOHNSON STATES THAT A POLICY THAT has as its objective "unconditional surrender" is unwarranted! That flies in the face of the objectives of the Allies in WWII! That policy resulted in the utter defeat of the

Axis powers and the execution of most of its leaders. Had such a policy been in effect during the Gulf War, nations today would not be facing another conflagration, for Saddam would have been dealt with.

*Oscar Hackbarth  
Sun Prairie, Wis.*

ON THE BASIS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF Discrimination (just war), the unconditional-surrender dictum of 1943 was wrong. On the basis of the Principle of Proportionality (just war), the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945 was wrong. (Yes, it shortened the war, but at what moral cost?) In 1946, while ethnic cleansing was raging against my family and other eastern German Lutherans, their fellow Lutherans in western Germany issued a statement of confession and contrition concerning WWII. In the same year, a number of churchman also issued a statement of repentance in regard to use of the atomic weapons.

No war is good, and even if war is absolutely the only alternative left in order to prevent a greater evil, it must be done in a repentant mind set. As I walked through the Pentagon not long after the terrorist strike, I was struck by the portrait of Lutheran Christian Gen. Jack Vessey, who was pointing to Holy Writ. As Luther stated in 1526, soldiers, too, can be saved, and many a serviceman like Vessey, who has seen war, knows that without the blessing of Almighty God, war and peace can both fail.

*Dr. Albert E. Jabs  
Columbia, S.C.*

## The missions shortfall

IT IS A BIG DISAPPOINTMENT TO READ that the mission board is cutting missionary units from foreign countries because of a shortage of funds ("National News," Jan. '03).

How many times in recent years have we ever heard a Lutheran sermon about our foreign mission program? Some new members don't know what the word "missions" means, because they never hear about it. Rather than eliminate missionaries, why hasn't our Synod leadership designated a special Sunday to make up this deficit? Only a couple dollars per member would wipe out this shortfall.

It seems that we have forgotten the words of St. Paul: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Are we as members and pastors concerned only about our own congregations and standard of living rather than our foreign-mission program?

*Sherwin Albrecht  
St. Peter, Ill.*

PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CONTROVERSY in the Synod are punishing missionaries and those they are trying to reach because of an internal fight. Withholding gifts from missions is a very poor response to something the missionaries and the lost in other lands did not cause.

*James R. Dudeck  
Oviedo, Fla.*

I FULLY BELIEVE THAT MISSIONS IS DEAR to the hearts of many in the LCMS. If, before recalling the missionaries LCMS congregations and individuals had been given opportunity to cover the shortfall, there would have been a strong rally to keep the missionaries on the field. It is shortsighted and reflects a misunderstanding of the missionary heart of

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LCMS members to recall missionaries before fully informing the church of the unexpected shortfall.

*Eileen Behana-Moore  
Albuquerque, N.M.*

### ***For more information ...***

WE WERE SO GLAD TO READ THERESA Shaltanis' advice to a married couple that they attend a Lutheran Marriage Encounter weekend retreat ("Family Counselor," Dec. '02). We attended one more than 10 years ago and it has helped us build a much better relationship. We now help present these weekends. Dates and places can be found on the Web at [www.ilme.org/dates.htm](http://www.ilme.org/dates.htm).

*Milton and Donna Kaufman  
Wilmot, S.D.*

THANK YOU FOR ENLIGHTENING YOUR readers to the persecution of Christians around the world ("They Suffer for Their Faith," Oct. '02). As someone who has written dozens of letters to our elected officials about this evil, it is my prayer that the eyes and hearts of God's people in the LCMS will be opened and that they will indeed do some of the things you have suggested.

For those who wish truly to get involved and/or to educate themselves about this problem, I would also suggest a resource that was omitted in your list: "The Voice of the Martyrs." To receive free publications, write to The Voice of the Martyrs, P.O. Box 443, Bartlesville, OK 74005; or see the Website at [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com).

*Meredith Berg  
North Hudson, Wis.*

***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 complete mailing address and telephone number.***

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# REFLECTING ON COLUMBIA

*Five Lutherans, themselves astronauts, share their thoughts on the space shuttle Columbia disaster.*

**I**t happened again, this time on a sleepy Saturday morning: shocking news that stunned the American people. The space shuttle Columbia had broken up on re-entry, 40 miles above the earth, only 16 minutes before its scheduled landing. All seven astronauts aboard were presumed dead.

Nowhere did the news hit harder that first day of February than in Houston, home of NASA's Johnson Space Center and so many of the flesh-and-blood men and women whose everyday lives are tied up with the nation's space program.

Just across the road from the space center is Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, where some 30 percent of the congregation's members are affiliated with the space program.

"When I heard the news, it remind-

*The Columbia crew exits the Operations and Checkout Building for a ride to Launch Pad 39A and a simulated launch countdown. From left are Payload Specialist Ilan Ramon, Mission Specialist Kalpana Chawla, Payload Commander Michael Anderson, Mission Specialist David Brown, Pilot William "Willie" McCool, Mission Specialist Laurel Clark and Commander Rick Husband. The STS-107 mission was devoted to research and included more than 80 experiments to study Earth and space science, advanced technology development, and astronaut health and safety.*





ed me how fragile life is—how much we can control, but also how much is out of our control,” said Rev. John Kieschnick, Gloria Dei’s senior pastor.

“It leads people to ask not just what is God trying to say, but what is God trying to say *to me*?” Kieschnick said. “We all are going to face death. The issue is, how are we going to face it? To me, a tragedy like this can teach a person to curse or to pray, to move away from God or draw closer.”

Five of those who make Gloria Dei their church home are active astronauts themselves. The crew of STS-107 (the shuttle mission’s official designation)—Rick Husband, William McCool, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Laurel Clark, Kalpana Chawla and Ilan Ramon—were their colleagues. In some cases, they were good friends.

All five Gloria Dei astronauts had something to say two nights after the disaster, Feb. 3, when more than 500 people gathered at the church for a memorial service.

“I’ve never been more appropriately proud of those five guys than at the memorial service,” Kieschnick said. “They all gave a strong witness to their relationship with Jesus Christ.”

Their part in the service, he added, was coordinated by Army Col. Jeff Williams, who spent nearly 10 days of May 2000 in space aboard the orbiter Atlantis as part of the STS-101 crew.

On these pages, edited for *The Lutheran Witness*, are the reflections on the tragedy offered by these five Lutheran Christians who also happen to be astronauts.



## Not alone in the dark

*Lt. Cmdr. Neil Woodward, U.S. Navy*

Those of us who personally knew the crew of STS-107 Columbia—and those who did not know them directly but understood and empathized with their dreams and dedication to explore the universe—at times like these natu-

rally hunger for comfort.

I think back to when I was flying off of aircraft carriers for the Navy. One of the strongest memories I have of those days was a feeling when we were flying at night far away from land. We were in the dark. You couldn’t see any land or any lights. You could see no ships. You could see no friendly aircraft.

We were just alone in the dark. And we were having problems with our plane. We felt completely and utterly



*Five active astronauts who attend Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Houston, spoke at the church for a memorial service for their friends who were lost two days earlier. From left are Rev. John Kieschnick, pastor at Gloria Dei, and astronauts Lt. Col. Tim Kopra, Lt. Cmdr. Tony Antonelli, Lt. Col. Mike Fossum, Lt. Cmdr. Neil Woodward and Col. Jeff Williams.*

alone against the dark and against the danger.

I’m sure that many of us have had this feeling of loneliness against the darkness. Your situations may differ in particulars from my own, but not as to the impact. To this day, I cannot adequately describe this feeling of loneliness, or alone, except to those who have been in similar situations. Even then I can’t use words, but only shared feelings.

The relative size of the darkness, our relative insignificance, the need for comfort, all could easily lead to despair. But in those days, I began to realize that I was not alone. I began learning that God was with me then, and that He granted to me through my faith the comfort that I needed to continue at that time and since.

Today, in our pain, we’re not physically isolated, but we can still feel alone. However, we should find comfort from each other and from our shared faith in God. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 1:3–4, “Praise be to the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the all-merciful Father, the God whose consolation never fails us. He consoles us in all our troubles so that we, in turn, may be able to console others in any trouble of theirs, and to share with them the consolation that we ourselves receive from God.”

One sees this consolation, ultimately derived from God, in ways that are subtle—a heartfelt inquiry, a handshake—and in obvious ways—the spontaneous display outside the Johnson Space Center across the street. We see these displays both from those who know us personally—our friends, our family, our care-groups—and from those who do not, from ordinary citizens putting together displays outside of JSC, or from people that we do not know at work shaking your hand and giving encourage-



*Astronaut Jeff Williams works on the International Space Station in May 2000, when he served as a mission specialist on STS-101 Atlantis. In completing his first space flight, Williams logged over 236 hours in space, including this 6-hour-plus EVA (space walk).*

ment. These expressions are of comfort for what will allow us all together to move beyond our pain, always remembering but never quitting.

This comfort, through faith, will see us through these dark times and will grant us the strength to continue God's work, both on and off this earth.



## How Christians mourn

*Lt. Cmdr. Tony Antonelli, U.S. Navy*

I briefly share a story that was relayed to me Saturday afternoon [the day the shuttle Columbia broke up during re-entry]. It was the communication between the capsule communicator—the CAPCOM—and the crew

of STS-107. It was at the end of a shift late Friday night/early Saturday morning.

This CAPCOM relayed to the crew of 107 that she had enjoyed working and training with the crew over the last several years, and especially enjoyed working with the crew while they were on orbit over the last couple of weeks. She was anxious for their return and was excited to see them back in Houston.

The crew of 107 replied that they were having so much fun on orbit, that they weren't ready to come home. Her response was that they need to come because

she will miss them. And they replied, "OK, we will come home, because we would miss you, too."

We're going to miss the crew of 107. But as Paul writes, as Christians we mourn, but we do not mourn as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). And as the psalmist said, "For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our Guide even to the end" (Ps. 48:14).



## Doing God's work

*Lt. Col. Mike Fossum, U.S. Air Force*

This hurts. We've lost seven friends, coworkers, neighbors and colleagues in a horrific and very public accident. Images from the news are burned into our minds, and they haunt us. But I want to share with you another image,

a personal one.

I met Columbia's commander, Col. Rick Husband, five years ago when he arrived at Edwards Air Force Base to attend the Air Force test-pilot school. He had a huge smile and spoke with a soft, "aw-shucks" panhandle drawl.

I actually met him in the base chapel one Sunday morning. He and his wife, Evelyn, were sitting right behind Melanie and me. He was singing in my ear with

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an incredible angelic voice. After the service, I turned around and said, “Who are you, and why aren’t you singing in the choir?”

Well, he was pretty busy as a student in test-pilot school, but we did sing in that choir together, and I came to know him as a wonderful Christian man whose faith in our Lord was open and transparent.

When President Bush addressed the nation on Saturday [the day of the disaster], he quoted from Is. 40:26: “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens. Who

created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name. Because of His great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

As I was sitting in Space Station Mission Control on Saturday, hearing these words, I thought of the beautiful stained glass in our sanctuary. I’ve loved it since I first saw it. It reminds me of God’s creation, with heavenly bodies—maybe other worlds suspended in space. Mankind was created in the Garden of Eden, but we

were given a mandate by God to be fruitful and multiply and to subdue the earth. In essence, we were commissioned to go forth, to explore, to pioneer.

Today’s space flight is the natural extension of that original quest. Rick and the rest of the Columbia crew were doing God’s work. As we grieve our loss today, we know the choir of the heavenly host just got a little stronger.

### **Jars of clay**

*Lt. Col. Tim Kopra,  
U.S. Army*



As I’m sure it has been for many of you, it’s been a pretty rough two and a half days. I’m sure I’m similar to a lot of you, where every time you see a certain image on TV or you hear a little anecdote, you feel this pit in the bottom of your stomach and you start to get choked up. But you recover, you push on, and you continue through your day.

This is a very small part of the pain that the families of the STS-107 crew are feeling, and my heart just breaks when I think of the hardship that they’re currently going through and suffering through.

We want courage and strength. As Christians, we know that the source of that strength and that courage comes from God.

Paul said it best: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; per-



plexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body" (2 Cor. 4:7-9).

So my prayer is that we can receive the strength and the courage to grieve, to take care of one another, for the STS-107 crew family to work through this process, and then eventually for the NASA community and the nation at large, to continue the vision that this crew was a vital part of.



### **‘Just tell them about Jesus’**

*Col. Jeff Williams, U.S. Army*

Rick, Willie, Mike, Casey, Laurel, Dave and Ilan. We lost seven dear friends this past Saturday. We were and are a family.

I can tell you that they died believing in what they were doing—for the betterment of you and me. They understood the risks. They lived in service to their country and to all mankind. They did so selflessly and courageously, with great enthusiasm and with an inspiring spirit of human exploration and discovery.

The question of why this happened cannot be answered. We can despair, or we can trust in God's unfailing love and divine providence. I choose to trust in God.

Last night I watched an interview. Perhaps some of you saw it. Rick Husband was quoted to have written in a note before launch, "Just tell them about Jesus."

Having had many conversations with Rick over the years on the subject of our faith in Christ, I feel compelled to take a moment to honor his request to just tell you about Jesus.

His greatest desire was to be God's instrument and to glorify Jesus Christ in his thoughts, words and deeds—in all of life, regardless of how long it was to be. His dependence was in God, and he completely trusted in his Lord and in the providence of God.

In telling us about Jesus, Rick would have us be reminded of the truth found in the Scriptures.

First, the Scriptures remind us of the certainty of death for everyone—for each of us. As the psalmist wrote, "What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?" He would also remind us of the truth of Scripture that tells us of the truth of our sin, of our bankruptcy before a holy God and of our utter inability to save ourselves.

But then we would be reminded of the truth of Scripture that tells us of God's grace and provision in



*The crew of the Columbia poses in front of the entry into Space Shuttle Columbia during Terminal Countdown Demonstration Test activities on the pad. Kneeling in front are (left to right) Payload Specialist Ilan Ramon (the first Israeli astronaut), Pilot William "Willie" McCool and Mission Specialist David Brown. Standing in back are (left to right) Payload Commander Michael Anderson, Mission Specialist Kalpana Chawla, Commander Rick Husband and Mission Specialist Laurel Clark.*

the sacrificial and atoning death of His Son on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to satisfy the justice of God. And of God's call to turn from our sin and ourselves and to trust in Christ alone. And then, as Christians, to be God's faithful instruments.

Finally, God calls us to live not with a temporal perspective, but with an eternal perspective and hope. As Peter writes, to recognize that God in His mercy, through faith in Christ, gave us "new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade" (1 Peter 1:3, 4).

Although we can't understand the purpose of God in what happened, perhaps—just perhaps—it's intended to wake us up from our slumber, to consider our priorities in life, to consider issues of life in eternity, to renew our commitment to Christ, or perhaps to come to Christ for the first time. If that is God's purpose, may God grant us the grace to respond.



## Distribution system offers e-news subscriptions

The LCMS e-News Distribution System allows individuals to subscribe to newsletters based on topical categories. Also, when a subscriber's e-mail address changes, the change can be made at one site for numerous subscriptions.

The new system, developed by the Electronic Media division of the LCMS Information Services Department, lets users choose from various categories of Synod ministries. When a category is selected, the various newsletters under that topic appear, offering users subscrip-

tions to the newsletters that are of interest.

"With the new system, we're hoping individuals will receive only the news they want, in an attractive format, with the addi-

tional advantage of changing their subscriptions and e-mail address easily through the Web site," said David G. Berner, director of Information Services.

To use the LCMS e-News Subscription Center, go to <http://lcms.org/enews> or click on the e-News button on the Synod's Web site at [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org).

## Society gives Synod missions \$40,000

A group of church leaders has started a mission society to benefit only LCMS World Mission.

Since its founding July 1, the Jesus Is Lord Mission (JILM) has given \$40,000 to LCMS World Mission, making it possible for the Synod to start work among Muslims in Afghanistan, and to replace a retiring mission-

ary in Kazakhstan.

Based in Walburg, Texas, the JILM "has a passion for Christ's mission" and is "thankful that it can help make a difference through its prayers, concern and support," said Dr. Will Sohns, its president and former president of the LCMS Wyoming District.

Dr. Glenn O'Shoney,

former executive director of LCMS World Mission and a member of the JILM organizing committee, said that JILM plans to ask all LCMS church workers—active and retired—to join the society.

For more information, contact President Will Sohns at (254) 986-1131; [cowboypastor@msn.com](mailto:cowboypastor@msn.com).

## Lutherans take part in Jan. 22 'March for Life' in D.C.

Missouri Synod Lutherans were among pro-life advocates who took part in the "March for Life" Jan. 22 in Washington, D.C.

The March for Life this year marked the 30th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion for any reason during all nine months of pregnancy.

Some 30 people from several states marched in the Lutherans For Life (LFL) delegation, according to Dennis Di Mauro, president of LFL's Northern Virginia chapter. Many of them worshiped that morning at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Arlington, Va.,

and then took the subway to where the march was forming.

Di Mauro estimated

that about 100,000 people participated in the march.

Marchers were "encouraged," Di Mauro said, by a

telephone greeting from President Bush, who was in St. Louis.

Bush promised to sign a bill banning partial-birth abortion if the measure is passed by Congress this year and said he shares the commitment of marchers to build a "culture of life in America."



Tens of thousands of people participated in the Jan. 22 "March for Life" in Washington, D.C., including a group representing Lutherans For Life.

### For more news...

For more news—and more timely news—visit <http://reporter.lcms.org> on the Web. That's the Web site for *Reporter*, the official newspaper of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

## Seminary appeals to benefit international students

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, has received a \$50,000 grant to help support its nine international students. And, officials at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, say that donors are becoming interested in supporting its five foreign students.

Last fall, an LCMS World Mission scholarship program for the seminaries' international students was put on hold because of the sagging economy. Known as CRISP (the Committee Responsible

for International Scholarship Programs), the program is funded from interest on investments from a \$2 million endowment.

"It would be a shame if these students could not continue ... at our seminaries," said Ken Reiner, a member of the mission staff who serves as liaison for the scholarship program. "Many CRISP students become key leaders in their churches."

In January, the Fort

Wayne seminary announced the \$50,000 grant from the Howard and Lori Peterson family. The release says the costs for the remainder of the international students' program is \$302,000.

Leonard Fiedler, vice president for development at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, said that costs would run about \$30,000 per student for the remaining time for the five CRISP students on that campus.

To support the interna-

tional students at Fort Wayne, earmark contributions "International Student Fund" and send them to Concordia Theological Seminary, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46825.

Donations for the St. Louis students should be earmarked "CRISP Students Fund" and sent to Concordia Seminary, 801 DeMun Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105.

Make checks payable to the respective seminary.

## LCMS World Mission eliminates 28 missionary posts

LCMS World Mission has eliminated 28 overseas missionary positions—one-fourth of its career-missionary force—in 18 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Central and South America. Most of the layoffs took effect Jan. 31.

A sharp decline in donations to missions caused LCMS World Mission to take immediate steps to make cuts. The mission board cut approximately \$3 million from its current \$29 million budget, and an additional \$6 million from the spending plan initially proposed for the 2003–04 fiscal year.

Nearly 78 percent of the mission board's budget comes from individuals, congregations and others who make special gifts to LCMS World

Mission, according to its executive director, Rev. Robert Roegner. Declines in giving led to the mission-board action. The remaining 22 percent, derived largely from Sunday-morning offerings, has remained relatively steady.

"In a time of economic downturn, it is not surprising that these special gifts decline," Roegner said. "I doubt that people are any less committed to the evangelization of the world or to the work of LCMS World Mission, but these are just not good economic times for many, many Lutheran people."

In spite of the layoffs, Roegner said LCMS World Mission still hopes to accomplish its goal of sharing the Good News of Jesus with 100 million

"unreached and uncommitted" people by 2017.

"Even as we have made our reductions, we have kept this goal ahead

of us," Roegner said. "Our strategies will change, but we will go forward. God can and will support us."

## Doctor safe after ordeal

Dr. William "Doc" Foster arrived in the United States

Jan. 3, after being trapped by rebels in Cote d'Ivoire for 29 days.

Foster, a physician, had served LCMS World Mission for more than six years as a medical missionary in Cote d'Ivoire.

On Dec. 1, rebels against the government broke into Foster's house in Toulepleu and fired an assault rifle beside his face several times. He says



Foster

hearing in his left ear was affected.

He was under house arrest for a day, and then moved to a Red Cross compound, where he treated patients, including those injured in the fighting.

He said that although the experience scared him, "I knew that if I died, I was going to heaven."

Rebels released Foster and two other foreigners Dec. 28.

Foster, 58, said he would gladly serve overseas again.

He is a member of Zion Lutheran Church, Wellington, Colo.



## STOP, LOOK, LISTEN!

by Robert E. Smith

**D**riving down the road, just on the top of the hill, you come to a railroad crossing. You slow down, perhaps come to a stop, look both ways and then proceed. You remember the advice you heard in driver's education: *Stop, Look and Listen*. Do this and you will live.

Life in the 21st century is constantly on the move. Like driving an automobile, rushing through open country, we move through our schedules at full speed, rarely slowing down enough to know where we're going.

We wake up to the radio or the television. We race to get ourselves ready for the day. We move from home to drop off kids at school, to work, to meetings, to lunch and to children's after-school activities. Then there's dinner, house and yard work, church activities and hobbies.

Sure, we can keep up this kind of pace for a while. But if we do not stop sometime, or at least slow down from time to time, we will run out of resources. With energy exhausted, we can grow weary even of the things we love. Church may become a chore; our work, worthless; our friends and family, frustrating.

If we are not careful to stop, to look and to listen to God, we are bound to crash.

During the Church Year, just over the top of the hill of Transfiguration, is Lent. (Ash Wednesday is March 5.) Here the Church has put a railroad crossing in life, calling on us to stop in the middle of our life, to look around at it all, and to listen to what God says to the children He loves.

God strengthens our faith as we do this, and He prepares us for Easter and its joy.

### Stop

In the following passages, God tells us why He wants us to stop. What do the following Scripture readings tell us about why we should pause to look and listen? What should we stop doing? What should we keep doing?

Psalm 46 \_\_\_\_\_

Mark 1:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 13:11-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 5:14-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 3:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_

### Look

In these Scripture verses, God calls on us to look around. What does He want us to see? What does He want us to change? How does He want us to be different from the world around us?

Luke 9:23-25 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 4:17-24 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 10:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 5:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Gal. 5:16-24 \_\_\_\_\_

Phil. 3:17-21 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Thess. 5:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

### Listen

God also tells us how we should live in the world we see when we stop and look. What do these verses tell us to do, as we begin again

to live our lives in the world?

Deut. 6:4-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 6:25-34 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 12:1-3 \_\_\_\_\_

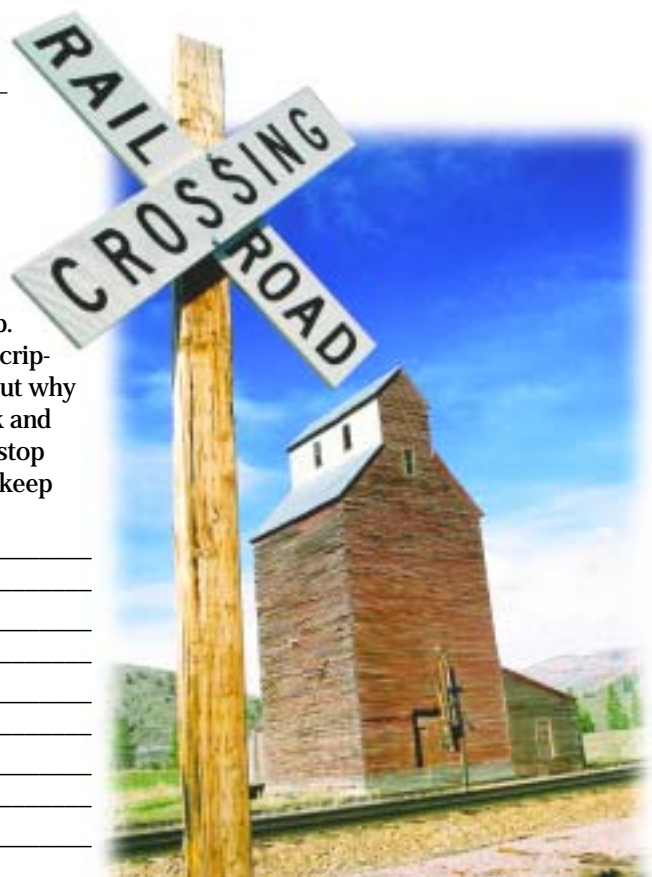
1 Cor. 7:29-31 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Peter 4:7-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Like a railroad crossing, Lent makes us stop in the middle of our daily lives, look at the world and our lives through God's eyes, and listen to His words of forgiveness, strength and guidance for living. As we cross over the tracks and go on our journey, we do so knowing that God is with us.



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## IN TIMES OF TROUBLE ...

**N***o, not again!* Those were the words on the lips of many Americans and in the headlines of magazines and newspapers following the untimely, shocking, tragic deaths of seven astronauts aboard the American space shuttle Columbia, which disintegrated at an altitude of 39 miles somewhere over east-central Texas on the morning of Feb. 1, just 16 minutes prior to its scheduled landing.

The *"No, not again!"* is, of course, a natural human response to yet another disaster impacting our United States of America, resurrecting similar but different emotions that have been simmering in our national psyche since Sept. 11, 2001. In addition, our collective recollection of another space-exploration disaster was awakened—the 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger some 72 seconds into liftoff, also claiming the lives of all the astronauts on board.

*At such times like those we face as this article is written, particularly in the midst of "rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6), to whom do we turn but to our true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, revealed to us in the precious and comforting Word of our God?*

While some among us would decry the danger inherent in space exploration, exhorting our government and ourselves not to place human life in harm's way by sending living beings to such destinations of enormously great distance above the face of planet earth, others—including the families of those who perished aboard both Challenger

and Columbia—are still strongly supportive of space exploration and the future benefits that it arguably, if not surely, has afforded our country and our world.

At such times like those we face as this article is written, particularly in the midst of "rumors of wars" (Matt. 24:6), to whom do we turn but to our true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, revealed to us in the precious and comforting Word of our God?

Accordingly, I share with you, with no further comment, a variety of Scriptural texts, offered with my prayer that your life, your heart and your spirit, even in the midst of the anxiety, fear, grief and worry that result from national tragedy and disaster, will be filled with "the peace that passes all understanding" (Phil. 4:7):

- "The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you" (Ps. 9:9–10).

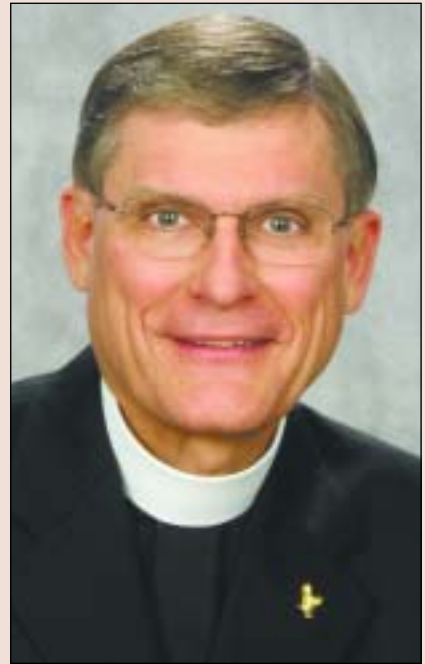
- "My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love" (Ps. 31:15–16).

- "But I will sing of your strength, in the

morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble" (Ps. 59:16).

- "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge" (Ps. 62:8).

- "The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him ..." (Nah. 1:7).



- "... [Y]ou know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ... But you ... are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ... So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. ... [S]ince we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thess. 5:2–11).

- "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you" (2 Thess. 3:16).

**Jerry Kieschnick**

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

John 3:16–17

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