

# *The Lutheran* **WITNESS**

AUGUST 2002

VOL. 121 NO. 8



## Interview with Ossie

Also:

*'Don't Do This!'*  
*Jesus' Special*  
*Lambs*



# The LUTHERAN WITNESS

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

## Features

AUGUST 2002

### 6 A VISIT WITH OSSIE HOFFMANN by David L. Mahsman

The interview was with Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, one of the country's best-known Lutheran clergymen. But it was all about Jesus Christ.



Photo by Roger Renken

### 12 A RAINBOW OVER RUSSIA by Barbara Angland

A simple expression of love for a "neighbor" on a train in another country is motivated by God's love in Jesus Christ.

### 16 'DON'T DO THIS!' by Julie Martinez

Barb was dead, but efforts to revive her continued. Death is ugly.

### 19 SILENT TEACHERS by Richard Maffeo

Want a quick lesson about the value of things in life? Visit a cemetery; read a few headstones.

### 9 JESUS' SPECIAL LAMBS by Anita Reith Stohs

Children with special needs need Jesus too.



SuperStock

## Departments



Cruise Control Page 3

- 3 Lifeline
- 4 Letters
- 14 National News
- 20 Notices
- 25 People & Places/  
Family Counselor

- 26 Searching Scripture  
John Armstrong
- 27 Q&A/  
Shedding Some Light
- 28 From the President  
Gerald B. Kieschnick



Official periodical of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through the Board for Communication Services, Dr. Martin G. Schramm, chairman; Rev. J. Thomas Lapacka, executive director.

Staff: Rev. David L. Mahsman, executive editor; Don Folkemer, managing editor; Joe Isenhower Jr., news editor; Paula Schlueter Ross, contributing editor; John Krus, senior designer; Darla Broste, marketing manager; Richard Sanders, coordinator; Steve Masterson, advertising sales; Carla Dubbelde, editorial manager, district editions; Charlesta R. Zekert, editorial assistant; editorial office: 1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; (314) 965-9917, Ext. 1228.

© 2002 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 and "Shedding Some Light" cartoons are not reproducible without permission. Also, photos credited to sources outside the LCMS are not to be copied.

Published monthly by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. Individual subscription \$18.00 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: [cphorder@cph.org](mailto:cphorder@cph.org)

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
1-888-THE LCMS (843-5267) [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)  
e-mail: [LUTHERAN.WITNESS@lcms.org](mailto:LUTHERAN.WITNESS@lcms.org)

Member: Associated Church Press  
Evangelical Press Association

August 2002 (ISSN: 0024-757X) Vol. 121, No. 8

Cover photo by Roger D. Renken.  
Courtesy of Lutheran Hour Ministries

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





## 'A Vital Relationship'

I am grateful for the encouragement to study again, abide by and not teach contrary to the Biblical and Confessional doctrine on church and ministry.

Rev. John H. Rhoads  
St. Louis, Mo.

SINCERE THANKS FOR THE ARTICLE BY DR. Robert Rosin ("A Vital Relationship," June '02). It was much needed. To understand and abide by what *Church and Ministry* so clearly delineates is rudimentary to sound Biblical doctrine and practice. Rosin has his finger on the neurological, theological main jugular lifeline of the church. It will benefit every interested member of our church. Thanks to *The Lutheran Witness* and Dr. Rosin for it!

Dr. E.F. Klug  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

DR. ROBERT ROSIN AND REV. MARK A. Loest correctly explained the origin of Dr. C.F.W. Walther's book on *Church and Ministry*.

It is important to note that the Synod in 1852 did not regard this as the position simply of the "Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other States," but of the Lutheran Church. The proceedings of the 1852 convention indicate that the book was sent to the Rev. J.A.H. Grabau "with the request that this book be read in its entirety that thereby they [the Buffalo Synod] convince themselves that our apology is nothing other than the voice of *the Lutheran Church*" (my emphasis).

Dr. George F. Wollenburg  
Billings, Mont.

## Roots of terrorism

I RESPECTFULLY DISAGREE WITH REV. Maynard W. Dorow that the roots of terrorism lie in the "absolute poverty"

of 20 percent of the earth's people and with the even more who are "badly undernourished" ("Letters," June '02).

The perpetrators of the terrorism were not impoverished or undernourished. They are members of wealthy Arab families and are not in the least concerned about poverty or malnourishment. They only *hate* the success of our country's society, as flawed as it is. They cannot stand the fact that we, as "infidels" in their eyes, are so blessed.

If these terrorists cared about poverty, they could channel their energy and monetary wealth toward fighting it. Destroying America will do nothing to change the poverty situation on this earth.

Dwight L. Schell  
Lincoln, Neb.

HELPING THE POOR AND OPPRESSED should be for the purpose of helping the poor and oppressed. Assuming that terrorism will consequently be reduced is not supported by a recent study.

In their June article in the *New Republic*, "The Economics and the Education of Suicide Bombers: Does Poverty Cause Terrorism?," Professors Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova conclude: "The evidence that we have assembled and reviewed suggests that there is little direct connection between poverty, education, and participation in or support for terrorism...."

They caution: "Drawing a false and unjustified connection between

poverty and terrorism is potentially quite dangerous, as the international aid community may lose interest in providing support to developing nations when the imminent threat of terrorism recedes. ... In our view, alleviating poverty is reason enough to pressure economically advanced countries to provide more aid than they are currently giving. Falsely connecting terrorism to poverty serves only to deflect attention from the real roots of terrorism."

Dr. Rick Strickert  
Austin, Texas

LET US PRAY THAT THE PRINCES OF SAUDI Arabia might be led to employ their great wealth for the material benefit of their subjects instead of funding al-Qaida or other terrorist organizations. And let us pray also that the dictator of Iraq might likewise be moved to use the proceeds of his oil sales for the good of the Iraqi people instead of for developing horrendous weapons for offensive purposes and for building opulent palaces for his personal enjoyment.

Meanwhile, let us individually continue our generous support of benevolent works through Lutheran World Relief and other means; and let our government continue to urge that all nations adopt the kinds of governments that foster individual liberty under the rule of law, along with the socioeconomic institutions that have been proven to make material prosperity possible.

Leonard C. Johnson  
Moscow, Idaho

## Body and soul

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ARTICLE BY Jonathan Frerichs, "Lutherans Helping in Afghanistan" (June '02). It's good to know that we are making efforts to help these dear people who have suffered so much and for so long. We dare not look the other way. I hope and pray that more of us

---

will be moved to share from our abundance in the work of Lutheran World Relief.

Listed right beside the article is an announcement of a preliminary study for mission work in Afghanistan. Bread for the body and life-giving food for the soul! That sort of reminds me of the Man from Galilee.

*Rev. Marvin E. Kuhlmann  
Raymore, Mo.*

### **Meaningful words**

AS I AM A DIVORCEE OF NINE YEARS, "With this Ring ..." (June '02) touched my heart and brought tears to my eyes. I am well aware of the divorce statistics for subsequent marriages, and those numbers scare me to death.

I have watched good friends enter into a second or third marriage and then have stood beside them when their marriages fell apart. Mr. Hoh offers a good suggestion, that couples read the Old Testament book Song of Solomon. God's Word offers the guidelines for absolutely every part of our lives if we will only study and follow it.

Even though I am scared by the divorce rate, I strive to be a "Prov. 31: 10-31 woman" every day and have faith that one of these days God will send across my path an "Eph. 5:25-33 man." With that combination, the words he and I speak to each other, to ourselves and, most importantly, to God — "until death do us part" — will mean just that.

*Jan Maisel  
La Grange, Texas*

***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.***

# A VISIT WITH OSSIE HOFFMANN

*The interview was with Dr. Oswald Hoffmann, one of the country's best-known Lutheran clergymen. But it was all about Jesus Christ.*

by David L. Mahsman

**D**r. Oswald C.J. Hoffmann is 88 years old. He's been a pastor, college professor, public-relations executive and author. He's met with presidents, kings and military leaders. Millions have heard him preach on the radio and in person.

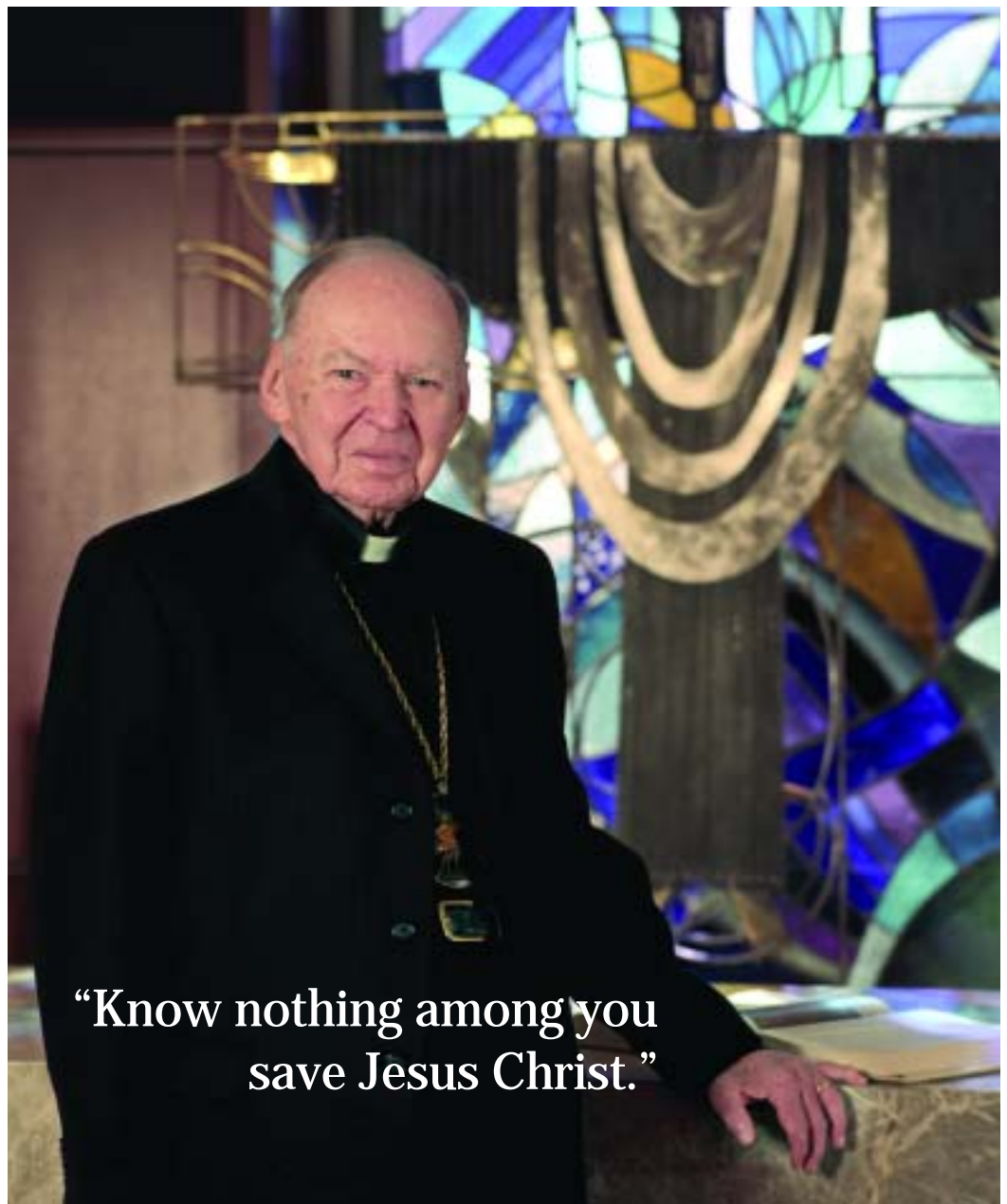
So, how about some advice, based upon this lifetime of experience? What words of wisdom might he have for us?

"Know nothing among you save Jesus Christ," he says.

These words, echoing the apostle Paul's resolve to preach and teach only Christ (1 Cor. 2:2) — or words very much like them — sounded a recurring theme when I visited recently with Dr. Hoffmann.

We sat together in a conference room at the suburban-St. Louis headquarters of the International Lutheran Laymen's League. For more than 30 years, Hoffmann was speaker on radio for "The Lutheran Hour," which is sponsored by the league, and that's probably how most people still know him.

When Hoffmann became "The Lutheran Hour" speaker in 1955, the program had a \$750,000 budget and was operating in the red.





Dr. Oswald C.J. Hoffmann helped chart the direction of 20th-century religious broadcasting. Speaker of "The Lutheran Hour" radio broadcasts from 1955 to 1988, he touched millions worldwide with weekly 30-minute sermons and helped advance the stature of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In 1948, he moved to New York City to establish The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Department of Public Relations. During his 15-year tenure there, he established offices in Washington, D.C., and St. Louis, and directed the activities of more than 350 church public relations volunteers.

In the early 1950s, he was instrumental in pioneering production of the "This Is the Life" weekly television dramas that focused on Christian family values. Hoffmann was appointed



speaker of "The Lutheran Hour" in 1955. He served as synodical public relations executive and broadcaster until 1963 when he moved to the International Lutheran Laymen's League headquarters in St. Louis.

Under Hoffmann's direction, "The Lutheran Hour" listening audience grew to encompass more than 125 countries and reached every continent over Armed Forces Radio. His signature programs addressed everyday problems and concerns within the Gospel context. At this time, Hoffmann also narrated Lutheran Hour Ministries television documentaries.

In 1989, he was named a life member of the Religious Public Relations Council, and in 1999 was inducted into the National Religious Broadcasters Hall of Fame.

When he retired from the post in 1988 (and was given the title "honorary speaker"), the budget exceeded \$9 million. The Lutheran Laymen's League now even identifies its work as "Lutheran Hour Ministries."

"It just grew," Hoffmann said of the weekly half-hour program's popularity. "We were just telling the world about Jesus Christ."

He moves more slowly now. And his words are sometimes hard to understand, his clear speech the victim of surgery a dozen years ago to remove a cancerous tumor from under his tongue. But he still maintains a rigorous travel schedule, and he's still preaching Jesus Christ.

When will he quit traveling?

"Maybe tomorrow," he tells me. Then he laughs, which he did quite regularly during our time together.

What about media? He used radio, at least primarily. What media should the Synod be using today to get out its message?

"That's not the real question," Hoffmann answered quickly. "The

real question is, what are we going to stand for? We stand for Jesus Christ!"

It's the Gospel of Jesus Christ that should be our message, he said.

Someone once suggested that he include a Bible reference whenever he signs his name. Hoffmann said he thought that a good idea. He picked Gal. 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body,

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Hoffmann told me: "We're not governed by the Law, but by the Gospel. That's the secret of ministry. I've watched people do it in different ways, but those with the Gospel did wonderfully. People listen to them.

"The Law promises so much and delivers so little," he adds.

Hoffmann acknowledges that there are "many more competing voices today" that are trying to get the public's attention than there were in the early days of "The Lutheran Hour." Still, he said, "it looks to me like the *Gospel* is the key for cutting through the mist and miasma today. ... Oh, yeah—it *is* a very old story. And it *is* good news!"

Before he was "The Lutheran Hour" speaker, Ossie Hoffmann was the Missouri Synod's public-relations director, a post he held from 1948 to 1963. (Yes, he did that along with his radio duties from 1955 to 1963. He was also assistant to the pastor at the nation's oldest

Lutheran congregation, St. Matthew in New York City, during that same period.)

Hoffmann lived in New York City, not St. Louis, in those days. From there he worked with all the major religion reporters of the day, directed the efforts of some 350 public-relations volunteers for the church body nationwide, and even supervised an office in Washington, D.C., that interacted with government leaders and policy-makers.

Hoffmann's public-relations and government-relations work had a focus: "We identified our church with Jesus Christ," he said.

He added that he doesn't think the Synod today is very well organized for doing that, for identifying The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod with Christ in the minds of the American people.

The Synod no longer has 350 public-relations volunteers all working together toward that one goal. Support for public relations at

*On Sept. 13, 1980, Dr. Hoffmann received the Secretary of Defense Award for Outstanding Service for his many years of service to the military.*

the national level is not what it once was. And an effort to re-open a Washington office for the Synod was turned down in May by the Synod's Board of Directors.

"We have a long way to go," Hoffmann said of the Synod. "We have to acquire a feeling of responsibility to the people outside of the church—Christians and non-Christians—to let them know what we're doing here," he said.

"That means you have to have a pretty clear idea of what your mission is," he added. And he gave this encouragement: "Just proclaim and represent Jesus Christ wherever that takes



you. That's Martin Luther. That's what *he* did."

And what about the people of the Synod's 6,000-plus congregations? What would he tell them if he had the chance to preach a sermon to them all?

"That's a good question," Hoffmann considered. "I would have to think about that."

He didn't have to think about it for long.

"I would pick a text, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,'" he says. "Then I would explain what that means. 'You have in your heart the love of God in Jesus Christ.

"OK, get it and go!'" he says with emphasis. And he laughs again.



*In 1971, Dr. Hoffmann met with U.S. President Richard Nixon to discuss his visits to Vietnam and Korea.*



*Rev. David L. Mahsman is executive editor of The Lutheran Witness.*

## Kieschnick calls for reversal of Benke suspension

LCMS Second Vice President Wallace Schulz has suspended Atlantic District President David Benke over his participation in a post-Sept. 11 event at Yankee Stadium.

But Synod President Gerald Kieschnick says Schulz's action violates a resolution adopted by last year's Synod convention and has asked Schulz to alter or reverse his action.

Schulz placed Benke on suspended status June 25 in a case related to Benke's participation in "A Prayer for America" last Sept. 23 at Yankee Stadium. Benke offered a prayer at the event, which

included participation by Christian and non-Christian clergy, political leaders and entertainers.

Benke has asked that his case be heard and resolved. A three-member "Dispute Resolution Panel" will hear the case. At deadline, there was no indication how quickly a panel might be established.

Last year's Synod convention adopted a resolution (3-07A), that commends "for continued use and guidance" two documents on church-fellowship issues from the Commission on Theology and Church

Relations and the late LCMS President A.L. Barry.

"Dr. Benke's decision to participate in the Yankee Stadium event was made following consultation with his ecclesiastical supervisor and other advisors, who provided counsel to him based on the Constitution of the Synod and 2001 Resolution 3-07A," Kieschnick wrote in his letter.

"... Vice President Schulz has suspended President Benke without even addressing the question of whether he has acted contrary to the doctrine and practice of the Synod as presented in Resolution 3-07A. As an officer of the Synod Dr. Schulz is bound to honor and uphold the resolutions of the Synod. Accordingly, any decision which he might make regarding the suspension of an LCMS pastor *must* be based on the understanding of what the

Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach *as determined by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in its constitution, bylaws and synodical resolutions*," Kieschnick wrote, adding the emphasis.

Schulz said July 10 that he has "no response" to Kieschnick's letter.

Kieschnick visited the Atlantic District July 11 and 12 to meet with Benke's congregation in Brooklyn, as well as with the Atlantic District Board of Directors and the board of regents, faculty and staff of Concordia College, Bronxville, N.Y. He said the purpose was "to encourage these members of the Synod, to demonstrate evangelical, pastoral concern for them during this stressful time, and to assure them of the love and support of the members of the Synod and of the Council of Presidents, including the synodical president."

## CCM ruling allows news about Benke dispute

A June 10 ruling of the Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) has tempered efforts by the Synod's Board of Directors to halt all reporting on the dispute involving Atlantic District President David Benke.

Meanwhile, Synod Secretary Raymond Hartwig has issued a plea to those who are parties to the dispute "to be faithful to the process," which includes restrictions on their giving publicity to issues in the matter.

The Board of Directors Feb. 1 ordered an immediate halt to distribution of any information concerning the Benke case.

The CCM has ruled, however, that the Board cannot restrict the ecclesiastical power of the Synod president or the bylaw-mandated duties of the Board for Communication Services.

The CCM ruling came in response to questions submitted to it by Dr. Martin Schramm, chairman of the Board for Communication Services, which is responsible for the Synod's two official periodicals, *The Lutheran Witness* and *Reporter*.

The full CCM opinion, which is part of the minutes for the June 10–11 meeting, is available online at [www.lcms.org/ccm/](http://www.lcms.org/ccm/).

## LFL to hold convention

The 20th National Lutherans For Life Convention is set for Nov. 8–10 in Appleton, Wis.

Speakers and a panel discussion will center on the theme "Time to Speak." The program also features a variety of workshops on pro-life topics.

Registration, including three meals, is \$85 per

person, or \$160 per couple, and \$75 for students. Deadline is Oct. 25.

Rooms at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, site of the convention, are \$95 per night, single or multiple occupancy.

For more information, contact Joyce Gierke, LFL's national convention director, at (402) 697-8215; [cjgierke@ditol.com](mailto:cjgierke@ditol.com).



## ***Cedel to head Concordia, Austin***

Dr. Thomas E. Cedel has accepted the call to be the president of Concordia University at Austin (Texas). He said that he planned to make the move to Austin sometime this month.



*Cedel*

Since last year, Cedel has been executive vice president and chief academic officer for Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Mich.

As president at Austin, he succeeds Dr. David Zersen, who retired last year.

Cedel, 52, joined the faculty at Ann Arbor in 1998, after a year with a

defense-contracting company in Virginia. In 1997, he retired after 26 years of active duty in the U.S. Air Force.

He earned both his bachelor's (1971) and doctor's (1979) degrees from the University of Pittsburgh.

Cedel and his wife, Penny, have two grown children.

## ***Nigerians publish Eleme translation***

Representatives of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and The Lutheran Church of Nigeria took part in a May 25 worship service in Rivers State, Nigeria, to dedicate the first New Testament in the Eleme language.

The translation project—spanning 20 years—involved members of both

church bodies and the Bible Society of Nigeria.

About 50,000 people in Rivers State speak Eleme, according to LCMS Missionary Rev. Chuck Tessaro, who supervised the translation.

The first printing produced 5,000 copies of the Eleme New Testament and Psalms, which were purchased—and are being distributed—by LCMS World Mission.

## ***Synod offers early retirement to 90***

In a move to minimize involuntary staff reductions due to budget cuts, 90 Synod employees have been offered early-retirement options.

All workers age 55 and up with at least five years service received the offer last month. They had 45

days to make a decision on the early-retirement measures—a first for the Synod. Most of those workers are at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis.

Barbara Ryan, executive director of Human Resources, says she expects “very few takers” because “people are here because of the ministry and they like working here.”

According to Brad Hewitt, chief administrative officer, about a dozen positions need to be eliminated and some vacant posts will not be filled.

The early-retirement option is only one cost-cutting measure taken to offset \$9.1 million in budget cuts made by the Synod Board of Directors in May.

## ***Texas flooding, western wildfires affect Lutherans***

By July, heavy flooding in Texas and massive wildfires in western states affected a number of Lutherans and Lutheran agencies, but no church members were known to have died or received serious injuries.

Heavy rain hitting central and southern Texas the week of July 4 spawned floods along a 300-mile stretch of the Guadalupe River, resulting in a dam spill that had the nearby New Life Treatment Center standing in 18 inches of water and mud.

The center, which

treats abused girls, is owned and operated by Lutheran Social Services of the South (LSSS). Officials of LSSS say that very little of an estimated \$2 million needed to clean up and rebuild the campus is expected to be covered by insurance.

Among Missouri Synod members known to be affected by the flooding are two families whose homes were condemned and a number of others with major water damage.

Wildfires, which started in June and ravaged about 619,700 acres in Arizona and 364,300 acres in

Colorado, destroyed buildings at a Lutheran retreat center and at least four homes of Synod members.

Lutheran Valley Retreat, near Woodland Park, Colo., lost six buildings and five trailers to one of the fires, forcing cancellation of its summer programs.

Two of the member homes destroyed were in Arizona, and the other two in Colorado. Fires came close to the property of at least two LCMS churches.

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), a cooperative ministry of LCMS World Relief and Evangelical Lutheran

Church in America Domestic Disaster Response, was assessing the fire and flood damage, and will coordinate recovery efforts.

LCMS World Relief is accepting donations to help meet the long- and short-term needs of those with losses from the flooding and fires.

Contributions earmarked either “Texas Flood” or “Wildfire Relief” may be mailed to LCMS World Relief, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-9810. Or, call the credit-card gift line at (888) 930-4438.

## IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY

by John Armstrong

**T**here is a hardwood floor in Michael Jordan's home stamped with the frowning face of a bull. It is from the old Chicago Stadium, where the Chicago Bulls basketball team played before the United Center was built. Jordan so loved playing in that stadium that he had its floor installed in his home.

I used to visit a man whose living room was lined with photographs of all his grandchildren at every stage of their development, from birth through college. He was so proud of his grandchildren that you could not visit him without hearing the latest news about them.

Every home reveals something about its owner. What does your home reveal about you? When guests enter, what do they learn about your interests, tastes and preferences?

What does God's home reveal about Him? If you could enter heaven right now, what would you see and hear, and what would you learn about God's preferences?

Read Rev. 4:1-11. What is happening in heaven (v.10)?

Compare the heavenly songs of Rev. 4:8-11 with Rev. 5:9-14. Of whom alone do the heavenly choirs sing? And how might this influence our selection of hymns and songs appropriate for Christian worship?

Now read Is. 6:1-7. Why was Isaiah heartbroken in the presence of God?

Is there any place for sadness and despair in our own worship of God? Why or why not? (Compare Luke 18:9-14 and Ps. 51:17.)

How did God remove Isaiah's despair (Is. 6:6-7), and what parallels can you find in our Lutheran hymnals?

Note the type of singing used in Is. 6:3. To whom were the seraphs singing?

How does this parallel Paul's advice to us in Eph. 5:19 to "speak to one another" in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?

How do we speak to one another musically in worship? (See *Lutheran Worship*, Pages 159, 160, 170.)

The early Christians believed that their own worship of God was not a mere imitation of but an actual participation in the worship of heaven itself! That's why our Lutheran liturgy says, "Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify your glorious name. ..."

According to Heb. 12:22-24, with whom do we join in this heavenly worship, and what comfort might this provide those who have



lost a loved one to death?

Heaven is now open to you whenever you gather with others for worship! Read Heb. 10:19-25. How can you, a sinner, confidently enter the presence of the Holy God?

Who is the focus of attention in God's heavenly home and, as a result, who should be the focus of attention in all Christian worship? Read Rev. 5:13 and 7:17; John 1:51 and 1 Cor. 1:23-24.



Rev. John Armstrong is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Columbus, Ind.

## 'IS THE JOY OF YOUR FAITH ALSO FOR ME?'

A number of years ago, the Missouri Synod in convention adopted the following mission statement:

"In grateful response to God's grace and empowered by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacraments, the mission of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is vigorously to make known the love of Christ by word and deed within our churches, communities and the world."

In many congregations throughout the Synod, this mission is being carried out in the lives of men and women, both career and volunteer leaders and members of the church.

During their recent gathering at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis, I invited the members of the Japanese Mission Society into my office to spend some time in dialog and to listen to the experiences they have had in their lives and ministries. During this visit, I had the wonderful privilege of meeting a number of former missionaries to Japan, people who have dedicated much, most and in some cases all of their lives to Gospel proclamation in the intriguing country of Japan.

Pastor Paul Moldenhauer of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Walled Lake, Mich., accompanied this group. One member of St. Matthew is Carol Christenson. She is involved in teaching English as a second language to many visitors from Japan who have settled in Walled Lake.

Carol shared the story of a young Japanese woman who engaged her in conversation about the obvious joy with which Carol

approached her life, her job, her family and her friends. Carol seized this opportunity to share her faith in Christ in a warm, sensitive and specific fashion.

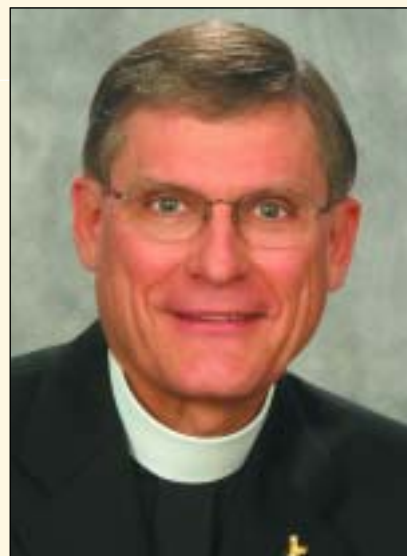
The young woman seemed to have difficulty understanding the connection between Carol's Christian faith and the joy that radiated from her words and deeds. She asked Carol about this joy. Carol replied by asking her whether or not she experienced any joy in her religious faith. The young woman lowered her eyes, dropped her head and remained silent for what seemed like minutes. Finally, she raised her head and simply said, "There is no joy in my religion. Is the joy of your faith also for me?"

Carol assured the Japanese woman that, indeed, the love and joy of Carol's Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, was available for her, too!

It is my hope and prayer that God's Spirit will provide such opportunities to you and to many in the Missouri Synod—even as He does to people in other parts of the Body of Christ, the Christian Church on earth—that His name might be hallowed and His kingdom expanded. For that, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, is the privilege and the priority that Christ has given His Church!

It reminds me of the spirit of joy that characterized the early church, just days after the ascension of our Lord into heaven:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled



with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42–47).

*"Is the joy of your faith also for me?"* Absolutely! Positively! By the grace of God!

May His grace and peace be with you all, as you live your lives to His glory, communicating His wondrous love by the words of your mouth and the deeds of your hands!

Thanks, St. Matthew, Walled Lake, Pastor Moldenhauer, Carol Christenson and all the rest of you, the 2.6 million members, the 2,400 schools and the 6,150 congregations of the LCMS, for your faithful and selfless commitment to the mission that Christ has given His church on earth! God's grace and peace be with you all!

**Jerry Kieschnick**

John 3:16–17

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

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