



# THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™



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BRITISH

WHOSE  
LAND  
IS IT?



ISRAELIS-  
PALESTINIANS

VOL. 125

NO. 10

NOVEMBER 2006

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Lutherans are people who care about their fellow man—body, mind, and soul—motivated by Christ’s boundless love.



## TO THE READER

Why do Lutherans resist dirtying their hands in the secular realm?

This is the question posed by Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto, director of the Institute on Lay Vocation at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in this month’s “We Are Needed: Are Lutherans Afraid to Take on the World?”

Lutherans, says Siemon-Netto, often are accused of being afraid to say

“boo” to a goose, a trait that flies in the face of Lutheran theology. Though we are busy as can be in the right-hand (or spiritual) kingdom, we basically are quietists in the left-hand (or civil or secular) one.

Why are we not more involved in politics and the media? Why are there but three LCMS members in the U.S. Congress: Sen. Conrad Burns (Mont.), Rep. John Shimkus (Ill.), and Rep.

David Reichert (Wash.)?

As Lutherans, we are called to proclaim the truth in both kingdoms—just different kinds of truth. We of all people—again, based on our theology—should be prepared to dirty our paws.

These are the things Siemon-Netto examines in his story appearing on pages 12–13.

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

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## The LSB

The new hymnal—i.e., the *Lutheran Service Book* (“His Word-Cast in Song,” October ’06)—has now become a fixture in many living rooms and family rooms around the country, including my own. If you don’t have a copy yet, you are missing out on a real treat.

As a Lutheran pastor and church musician, although I appreciated some of the advances of *Lutheran Worship*, I often found myself apologizing for its deficiencies. The new book is *Lutheran Worship* without the embarrassment.

Projects like this don’t come to fruition without years of labor and intense commitment by its leaders. In this case, Dr. Paul Grime and Rev. Jon Vieker, the executive and assistant directors, respectively, of the LCMS Commission on Worship,

In 1982, however, *Lutheran Worship* changed the punctuation to “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, ...”

The comma amid the series of semi-colons in 1941 rightly stressed that “the holy Christian Church” and “the communion of saints” are names for the same body, not two different things.

Another error: *Lutheran Worship’s* (and the *LSB’s*) wording for “Hark, the Voice of Jesus Calling” says “Take the task he gives you gladly,” when we really mean “Gladly take the task he gives you.”

Let me be the first to say it: We need a new hymnal to correct the mistakes of *LSB*.

Rev. Oscar A. Gerken  
Eustis, Fla.

reporters having to talk about Christ and the truly peaceful way of life the Amish strive for through the teachings of Jesus Christ. Just as the article said that the heavenly Father often does His work through those who suffer, so do I believe that some good will come from this suffering.

Cindy Chartier  
Lumberton, N.J.

## The sin of divorce

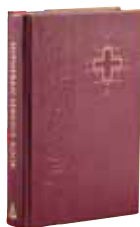
How deeply disappointing it was to see the short shrift given to marital reconciliation versus divorce (“Mental Desertion” and Divorce,” “Family Counselor”—September ’06).

As one whose life, along with her three children’s lives, was devastated by divorce, I can tell you it has been a terrible journey.

It seems the Missouri Synod is allowing the secular culture to shape and dictate its attitudes toward divorce. God instituted marriage as the foundation of society. Sadly, the *Witness* flies in the face of this truth with its cavalier attitude that divorce is simply another sin among many.

Yes, there is forgiveness in Christ for any sin, but some sins carry untold heartache and grave consequences for those deserted.

Anonymous  
Milwaukee



“Projects like the new hymnal don’t come to fruition without years of labor and commitment. The Commission on Worship deserves the thanks of all Missouri Synod Lutherans.”

Dr. Martin R. Noland  
St. Louis

along with the members of the commission and others, deserve the thanks of all Missouri Synod Lutherans for their work and dedication.

Dr. Martin R. Noland, Director  
Concordia Historical Institute  
St. Louis

Sorry, but I can’t get excited about *Lutheran Service Book* because it perpetuates flaws from 1982’s *Lutheran Worship*.

*The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941 correctly printed the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed as “I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; ...”

## The Amish example

“Why Do We Suffer?”

(October ’06) really hit home for me in light of the happenings in Pennsylvania, where 10 Amish girls were shot and five killed.

The suffering the Amish families went through, and will continue to go through, is beyond my imagination. This article described in a wonderful way how the families of the victims could weather this terrible time and show compassion and forgiveness within hours of the slayings.

The Amish showed what true Christians should be like. How wonderful this was to see. And how remarkable it was to see

## Too swift to judge?

I found it curious that the July/August “Family Counselor” (“Keeping confidentiality”) immediately suspected the *pastor* as being the source of the confidentiality leak. How did the letter-writer (who was *not* the person whose confidence allegedly had been broken) even know that her friend had had a confidential conversation with the pastor? Isn’t it plausible that what the friend shared with her pastor she also shared with one or more in the congregation?

One of the first things I share with anyone who comes into my study for private confession and absolution, or simply to unburden his or her soul, is that “my ears are a tomb, and if what you’re about to share leaves this office, it will not be by me.” This is important to reaffirm for folks, because quite often, what they share with me they also share with someone else.

*Rev. Ed Harkey  
Raynham, Mass.*

### ***Bravo, Kloha!***

I commend Prof. Jeffrey Kloha for his fine article on the history of the New Testament (“The Revelation and Inspiration of the New Testament,” September ‘06).

His piece was timely, succinct, and informative, meeting the challenges of the false, anti-Christian teachings of many in our society today. Prof. Kloha refuted these claims beautifully, encouraging the faithful to stand up and speak out about such popular misconceptions.

You ought to do a reprint of this article for wider distribution in tract form.

*Paul Sparling  
Morris Plains, N.J.*

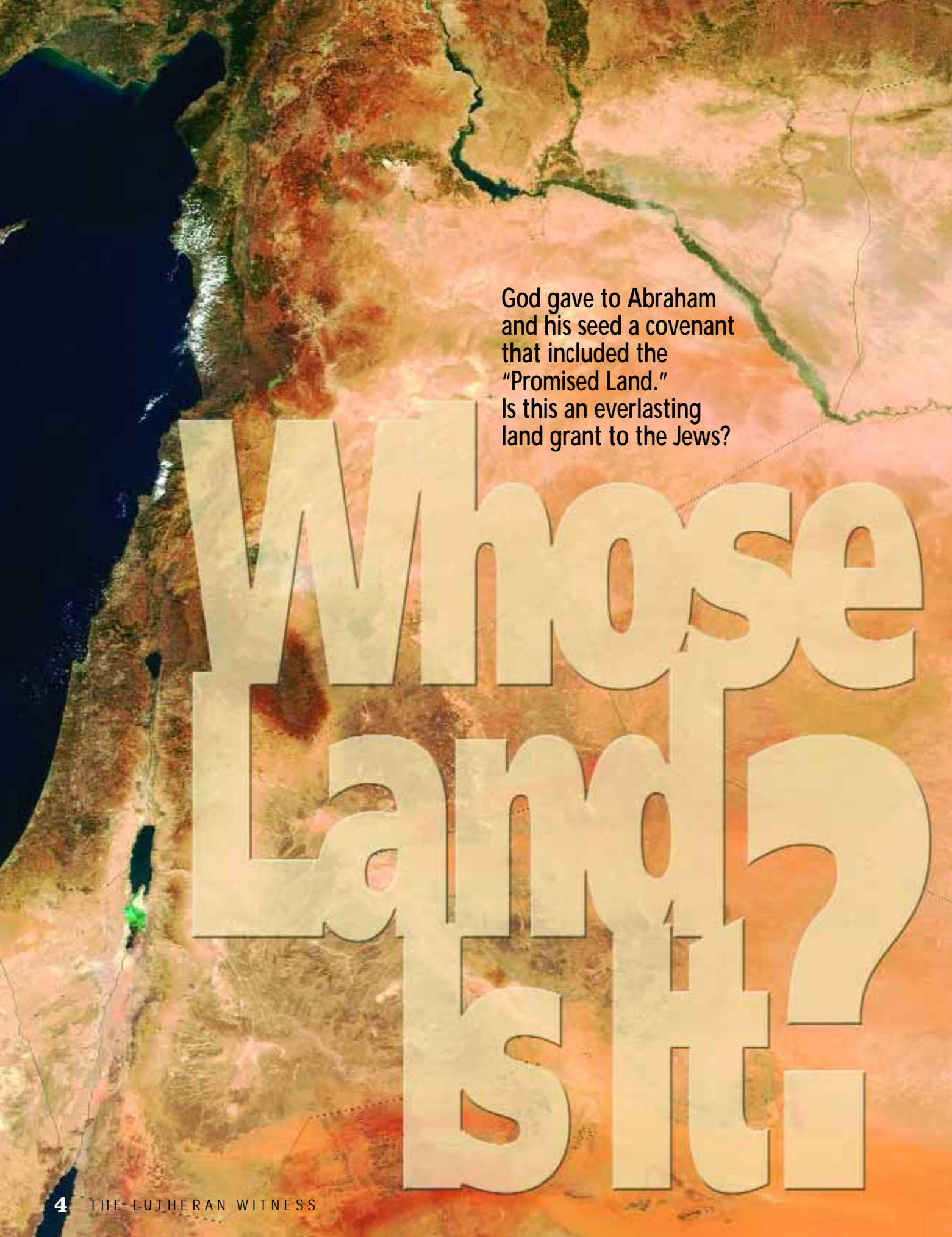
### ***Counterpoint***

I take exception with the negative comments about the *Witness* expressed by a letter-writer in the September issue. Personally, I find the redesigned format inspiring and helpful.

The magazine’s content is balanced, as seen by the September issue, which included an excellent article on the writings of the New Testament, the beautiful stories of four Lutherans who are “making mercy happen,” and the thoughtful article on humor.

I see *The Lutheran Witness* as a blessing given to our church, and I pray that you continue your good work.

*Chris Lamb  
Port Coquitlam, B.C., Canada*

An aerial photograph of a desert landscape, likely the Middle East, showing a winding river and a dark body of water on the left. The terrain is a mix of reddish-brown and tan colors.

God gave to Abraham  
and his seed a covenant  
that included the  
“Promised Land.”  
Is this an everlasting  
land grant to the Jews?

# Whose Land Is It?

by Reed Lessing

**A**s a parent who survived the toddler years with three children, I still clearly recall the “Toddler Property Laws”: If I like it, it’s mine. If it’s in my hand, it’s mine. If I can take it from you, it’s mine. If I had it a little while ago, it’s mine. It must never appear to be yours in any way; it’s always and forevermore mine!

Over the millennia, numerous rulers, governments, and nations have looked at the land of Israel and said, “Forevermore, mine!”

The land once belonged to the Amorites, as we learn in Genesis 15. Then it was possessed by the Israelites. The Assyrians (2 Kings 17:6), Babylonians (2 Kings 25:22), Persians (2 Chron. 36:23), Greeks (Dan. 11:1–5), and Romans (Luke 3:1) all claimed ownership at times during Old Testament history. And since the end of the New Testament period, the Byzantine, Ottoman, and British empires have looked at this land and said “Mine!”

So whose land is it?

## Politically or theologically?

Generally speaking, the question of who owned Palestine was answered *politically* from 70 A.D., when the Roman army crushed the Jewish rebellion and dismantled Jerusalem, until the 1840s. Whoever had the military might and diplomatic ability owned the land.

In the 1840s, John Nelson Darby, a Plymouth Brethren minister from England, began teaching that the question of Palestine’s ownership needed to be answered *theologically*.

By introducing the method of biblical interpretation called Premillennial-Dispensationalism, Darby heralded the idea that biblical history is divided into seven “dispensations” or periods of time. The end of the sixth dispensation, he stated, would be triggered by Israel’s return to the land.

Picking up where Darby left off, Cyrus Scofield propagated Premillennial-Dispensationalism in his influential *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1909. The *Scofield Reference Bible* is the single most important document espousing the teaching that God *permanently* gave the land of Palestine to the Jews.

Prior to these teachings of Darby and Scofield, most Christians (including Lutherans) understood the owner-

ship of Palestine to be a political issue, not a theological issue.

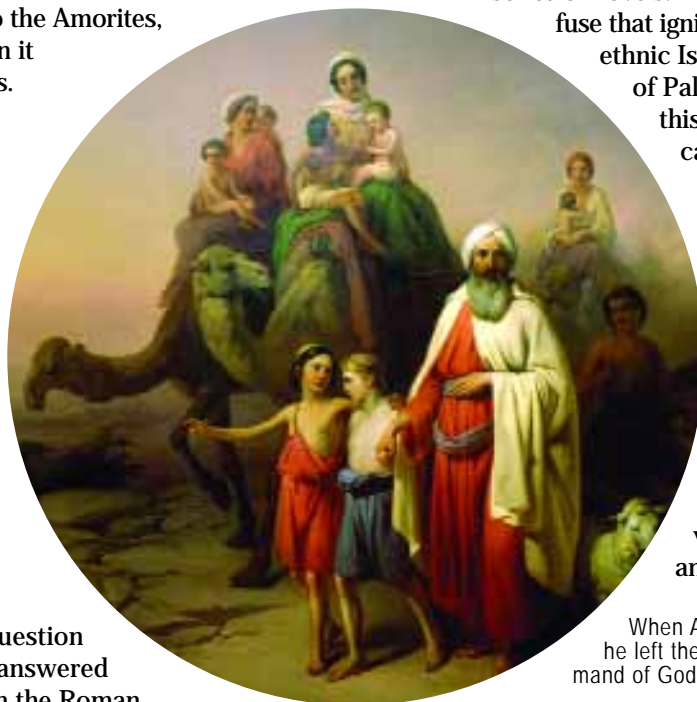
All of that has changed. It is estimated that 40 million Christians in the United States now embrace the idea that the present-day state of Israel created by the United Nations in 1948 is by divine decree and is a sign that we live in “the last days.”

## The “Left Behind” effect

Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye have taken Scofield’s ideas and disseminated them via their “Left Behind”

series of novels. The authors believe the fuse that ignited “the last days” was ethnic Israel’s return to the land of Palestine in 1948. They call this “the super sign of biblical prophecy” because they believe this event will trigger the rapture of the Church, which could occur at any moment.

The rapture will be followed by seven years of suffering and destruction, called the tribulation. After this, Christ will visibly return as Judge and usher in the seventh



When Abraham was 75 years old, he left the land of his father, by command of God, and went to Canaan.

dispensation, His 1,000-year reign on earth. During this time, unbelievers will increase in numbers. Christ will return (again) and bring all evil to an end. He will usher in the new heavens and new earth. The key to the unfolding of these events, they believe, is that the land of Palestine forever belongs to the Jews.

## What does the Bible say?

The Old Testament declares that the land of Canaan (approximately present-day Israel and Palestine, plus adjoining coastal lands and parts of Lebanon and Syria) belongs to the Lord (cf. Ps. 24:1); He is the one who gave it to Israel (Deut. 6:10–11), and He is the One who can take it away (Lev. 26:33). Land could not be permanently bought or sold (cf. 1 Kings 21:1–16); it could not be given away, let alone stolen or confiscated. The land in the Old Testament was always a means for a greater end, the coming of Jesus Christ in the fullness of time (Gen. 17:1–7; Gal. 3:14, 29; 4:4). To a large extent, however, it was Israel’s belief that it—not the Lord—



The Dome of the Rock is a major Muslim shrine built around 690. It sits on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem where Solomon's Temple and the second Temple from Christ's lifetime stood. According to some Christians it is also the site of the third and final Temple to be built before Christ's Second Coming.

the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

Until the Day of Pentecost, the disciples shared the same nationalistic understanding of the land as the other Jews of the first century (cf. Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6). But after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they began to use Old Testament language concerning the land in new ways. One example comes from Peter, who speaks of our inheritance that, unlike the land of Palestine, “can never perish, spoil, or fade” (1 Peter 1:4).

owned the land that led to the Northern Kingdom's exile of 721 B.C. to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom's exile of 587 B.C. to Babylon.

When Jesus speaks about the land in Luke 19:41–44, He makes no reference to it ever being restored to the Jews. Rather, He taught His disciples to look forward—not to a Jewish return to the land—but to the coming of the Son of Man in His glory on the Last Day (Matt. 24:30–31; Luke 21:25–28; Dan. 7:13–14).

Jesus makes only several explicit references to the land in the Gospels. The strongest is in the Beatitudes. In Matt. 5:5, the Savior quotes from Ps. 37:11, where the blessing of the meek is the inheritance of the land. Yet, it is not the land of Israel, but the entire earth that the meek will inherit (cf. Rom. 4:13). And, in light of the strong eschatological dimensions of the Sermon on the Mount, this earth is the “new heaven and the new earth,

filled with examples of how the New Testament reinterprets “the land.” Christians have the land, described as the rest into which they have entered through Christ (Heb. 4:1–11). In Heb. 11:13–16, the central Gospel motif is the land. The pilgrimage of faith is set in three scenes: a land from which they set out in faith, the present context of wandering, and the hoped-for homeland that is a “better,” indeed a “heavenly” city.

**The Church—not Jews or the Israelis—is the true Israel of God, and the baptized are the children of Abraham.**

## A Quick History of the Holy Land

### Before Christ

Some scholars use Bible lineages to date Abraham around this time. Commanded by God, he leaves Ur, a wealthy, corrupt city in today's southern Iraq, and later, leaves Haran in today's southern Turkey. He receives God's word to “give you this land.”

**1450:** Egypt's pharaohs subjugate the Canaanites, including Abraham's descendants.

**1250–1200:** A probable period when the Israelites enter the Holy Land after their Exodus from Egypt and reclaim the land from diverse Canaanites.

**980 to 935:** Kings David and Solomon build a rich Israel empire. Solomon's Temple is built.

**930:** Shortly after Solomon's death, the Kingdom is divided between North (Israel) and South (Judah).

**722–721:** The Assyrians conquer the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The 10 tribes are deported and disappear from history.

**606–581:** King Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army conquers Judah, destroys Jerusalem, including the Temple. Judeans are taken to Babylon.

**539:** The Medes and Persians (from modern-day Iran) capture Babylon. God induces King Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to their land. They rebuild the Temple.

**332:** Alexander the Great's Greek army sweeps across the Holy Land.

**323:** After Alexander's death, his generals, Ptolemy in Egypt and Seleucid in Syria battle for the land.

**63:** Roman armies under Pompey overrun the land and begin a 600-year rule. Herod the Great becomes ruler of Judea.

## Shadows or reality?

Premillennial-Dispensationalists believe that Israel's resettlement of the land in 1948 is the key to a correct understanding of the end times. They contend that Old Testament prophecies regarding not only the land, but also such promises as the rebuilding of the Temple and the reinstatement of its sacrifices, must be literally fulfilled.

It is clear from Scripture, however, that these Old Testament promises are to be read in light of the New Testament. The Old Testament revelation of God's acts in the history of Israel consists of shadows, images, forms, and prophecies. The New Testament announces the reality, substance, and final fulfillment of these promises in the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 5:39; Luke 24:44).

The question, then, is not whether the land-promises of the Old Testament are to be understood literally or spiritually. Rather, it's a question of whether they should be understood in terms of Old Testament shadows or in terms of New Testament realities.

When the New Testament is allowed to interpret the Old Testament, it follows that the 1948 state of Israel is *not* a prophetic realization of the Messianic kingdom of Jesus Christ. His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Furthermore, a day should not be anticipated in which Christ's kingdom will manifest Jewish distinctives, whether by its location in the land of Palestine, its capital in Jerusalem, its constituency, or its ceremonial institutions and practices. The Old Testament needs to be viewed in light of Jesus Christ.

The land-promises that God gave to Abraham were made effective through Christ, Abraham's true Seed (Gal. 3:16). All spiritual benefits are derived from Jesus, and apart from Him there is no participation in the promises made to Abraham (Gal. 3:26–29). These promises

The hope of the baptized is not placed on current events in the Middle East. Rather we are called to fix our eyes on Jesus.

are not directed toward any particular ethnic group. The Church—not Jews or the Israelis—is the true Israel of God, and the baptized are the children of Abraham.

When Premillennial-Dispensationalists point to the modern state of Israel as a concrete manifestation of God's presence, they overlook the fact that God has left visible and tangible signs indicating that He is with His people. First John 5:7–8 states: "For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement." God testifies to being present with His Church right now by means of the Spirit-inspired and Christ-centered Old and New Testament Scriptures,



Fishing on the Sea of Galilee looks much the same today as it did when Jesus called Peter and Andrew to "follow me."

## After Christ

**4 B.C. to A.D. 27:** Christ's life and ministry in Israel.

**A.D. 30–300:** The new faith reaches out vigorously to gentiles, answering Christ's call to "teach all nations, baptizing them."

**330:** The Christian Byzantine Empire begins when Emperor Constantine is converted to Christianity.

**By 640:** Muslim armies drive Byzantine Christians from the Holy Land; they rule for a while from Baghdad. Jerusalem is recognized as a holy city in Islam and the Temple Mount as the place where

Muhammad ascended to heaven.

**1099 to 1291:** European crusaders establish the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

**1516:** Ottoman Turks overwhelm the Holy Land. It remains in Muslim control until World War II.

**1920:** Britain installs monarchies in Iraq and Transjordan. The latter governs Palestine. Fleeing Europe and Russia, Jews flood into Palestine from 1920 on.

**1947:** The United Nations divides Palestine into two states, one Jewish, one Arab. Jerusalem to be

administered by the UN to avoid conflict.

**1948:** Israel, populated by Jewish refugees from Europe, Africa, and Asia, proclaims itself a nation. Open warfare between the new Israel and its Arab neighbors makes refugees of Palestinians.





# Some Important Definitions:

**Amillennialism:** This is the historic teaching of the Church that there will not be a literal, 1,000-year earthly kingdom of Jesus. This view is better termed “realized millennialism” because it embraces the idea that Christ is reigning now. The “thousand years” of Rev. 20:1–10 is intended to be understood figuratively as a reference to the time of Christ’s reign as King from the day of His Ascension until the Last Day. Hence, the millennium is a present reality (Christ’s heavenly reign), not a future hope (Christ’s rule on earth after His return).

**Dispensationalism:** This is a system of biblical interpretation that distinguishes seven distinct periods or “dispensations” in biblical history:

1. Innocence (before the Fall);
2. Conscience (from the Fall to Noah);
3. Human Government (from Noah to Abraham);
4. Promise (from Abraham to Moses);
5. Law (from Moses to Christ);
6. Grace (the church age);
7. the Kingdom (the millennium).

Dispensationalists believe that God’s redemptive plan focuses on national Israel.

**Last Days:** The phrase “the last days” appears 27 times in the New Testament. Premillennial-Dispensationalists teach that with the creation of the 1948 state of Israel, the world has entered the last days. However, in most biblical instances, it is used of the eschatological epoch, which began with the coming of Jesus Christ.

**Millennium:** Derived from the Latin for 1,000 years. Premillennial-Dispensationalists understand the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 as literal. But the Bible teaches that Christ is reigning now, and that His gracious rule that began on the day of His Ascension will continue until the Last Day, when He will hand “over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power” (1 Cor. 15:24).

**Premillennialism:** The belief that the Second Advent will occur before the millennium. This view holds that Scripture is to be interpreted in a “literalistic” manner; the Church and Israel are two distinct groups for whom God has a divine plan; the Church is a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament; and the “age of the Church” must be completed before God can resume His main program.

**Rapture:** This refers to the event described in 1 Thes. 4:14–17, when believers will be “raptured” or “caught up” (Latin: *rapiemur*) in the clouds to meet Christ in the air at His Second Coming. When used by Premillennial-Dispensationalists the term refers to Christ’s secret coming, when all believers and all children who have not reached the age of accountability are suddenly removed from the earth before the seven-year tribulation.



## Premillennial-Dispensationalists

**understand these four terms to be**

**synonymous:** Israelite, Hebrew, Jew, and Israeli. In this way, they are able to apply God’s land-promises to the Israelites of the Old Testament to modern-day Jews, and especially with the 1948 state of Israel. But these four terms have different definitions:

**Israelite:** An Old Testament believer in Yahweh (the Lord), the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Hebrew:** Used by Israelites in the Old Testament to identify themselves to non-Israelites.

**Jew:** This term means either an ethnicity or an adherent to “Judaism,” which is not the Christ-centered faith of the Old Testament.

**Israeli:** A citizen of the 1948 state of Israel, which is not the same Israel of the Old Testament. Israelis are sometimes called “secular Jews.”

— R.R.L.

For a more comprehensive response to the Premillennial-Dispensational theology that undergirds the “Left Behind” series, read the document from the LCMS Committee on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) titled, *The End Times: A Study on Eschatology and Millennialism* and the 2004 CTCR document titled, *A Lutheran Response to the Left Behind Series*, along with its accompanying Bible study.

the water of Baptism, and the true body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.

The assurance of God working in the world is therefore not based on the return of the Jews to their ancestral land, but rather on the sure Word of promise of forgiveness of sins imparted in the means of grace, the Gospel and the Sacraments.

There is no suggestion that Jesus or the apostles believed the Jewish people still have a divine right to the land, or that the Jewish possession of the land would be an important—let alone central—aspect of God’s plan for the world. The land was promised to Abraham, taken possession of under Joshua, lost in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, regained by Judah upon Cyrus’ decree in 538 B.C., and reinterpreted by Jesus, Paul, and others as a new heaven and new earth.

The hope of the baptized, therefore, is not placed on current events in the Middle East. Rather, we are called to fix our eyes on Jesus as we long and pray for His Second and Final Advent. On that day, He will raise us from the dead and usher us into the new heavens and the new earth. Then Jesus will lovingly gaze upon all the baptized and say, “I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are always and forevermore mine!” (cf. Is. 43:1).

Dr. R. Reed Lessing is associate professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



by Michael Middendorf

## Do these situations sound similar to your life experiences?

*M* You wake up most mornings with a sincere desire to serve God. You also know what many of the God-pleasing things are that you ought to do that day. But, by the end of every day, you have failed to do quite a few of them. You also begin each day fully aware that there are sinful thoughts, words, and deeds you should avoid. But each day ends with the realization that you have done a number of them.

**Is it any wonder you have some spiritual anxiety?**

*M* Illness is present in your life or family. Some Christians assert that if your faith is strong enough, these physical or emotional problems can be overcome. Yet the sickness is not going away.

**Is it any wonder you have spiritual anxiety?**

*M* Other people, even your brothers and sisters in Christ, often fail to treat you the way they should. At times, they let you down, mislead you, or betray your confidence in them.

**Is it any wonder spiritual anxiety is present even among God's people within the church?**

*M* Your life seems to be spiraling out of control. This perception may be caused by a crisis involving career, finances, or family.

**Is it any wonder you have spiritual anxiety?**

Perhaps you have experienced other sources of spiritual anxiety as well. Many Christians are troubled by the fact that they must endure such struggles. After all, Jesus *promised* to give us peace. He announced that by His suffering and death, the devil has been judged, and this evil world has been overcome. Jesus' resurrection conquered the power of death and grants us new life. Why, then, do Christians still struggle with spiritual anxiety?

Christian theology and Lutheran doctrine contain a lot of paradoxical elements. Consider the following: The Bible is both a divine and a human product. In it, God speaks to us both Law and Gospel. We hear about His wrath and His mercy and about our sin and His grace. Jesus Christ is both fully God and fully human. The Lord's Supper is bread and wine yet, at the same time, Jesus' body and blood. Christians live in both the left-hand kingdom under the forceful power of governments established by God, and in the right-hand kingdom of God where grace reigns.

One key aspect of New Testament theology is yet another paradox—the tension between the “now” and the “not yet.” On the one hand, with the coming of Jesus into our world and into our lives, so many blessed things have already *now* occurred. For example, the Kingdom of God has arrived; the rule of sin, death, and the devil has been overcome; and the Law of God has been fulfilled for us. In Baptism we died with Christ to sin and have been raised to walk in newness of life. The New Testament asserts that already now forgiveness of sins, a justified and reconciled relationship with God, everlasting hope, the love of God, the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and the joy of the Lord are all ours through faith in Jesus. At the same time, however, believers still live in a “not yet” world where violence and evil run rampant, the devil still prowls like a roaring lion, and death appears to prevail.

But the problem is not simply out there in the world. A similar kind of paradox is unavoidably present within the Christian life as well. The Latin phrase *simul*

*justus et peccator*—“at the same time righteous and sinner”—articulates what Martin Luther saw in St. Paul's writings about the Christian life. Believers living in this world are justified saints before God (literally, “holy ones”). Yet, at the same time, they still live with their own selfish, sinful nature. St. Paul writes in Gal. 5:17: “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” Here and

*now*, Christians live with this unresolved tension. We do *not yet* fully experience the blessings promised to us by God. One common result is spiritual anxiety.

The middle chapters of St. Paul's letter to the Romans clearly exhibit this paradox and provide its most emotionally gripping expression. Romans 6 declares that we have died to sin in our Baptism. Yet Paul repeatedly urges believers to resist sin as we await a future day when we will be united with Christ in His resurrection.

So which is it? Are we dead to sin, or actively struggling against it? Paul says we are justified from sin and free from its reign, but we still battle against sin.

Romans 8 climatically affirms that the Holy Spirit lives within us granting peace, life, and righteousness; not even death can separate us from God's love in Christ. Yet the same chapter announces that our mortal bodies are dead because of sin; with all creation we “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.” So, has redemption come in Christ Jesus as Rom. 3:24 states, or are we still waiting for it?

Once again, the paradoxical answer is “both.”

It's the chapter between those two, Romans 7 that reveals the extent of the spiritual anxiety with which St. Paul himself lived. His topic is the holy, righteous, and good commands of God's Law. Paul affirms, “I agree with the Law that it is good. ... For I delight in the Law in my inner being.”

Yet he adds: “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but

**The question is not whether you and I will face anxieties, but rather how we will deal with them as believers.**



what I hate I do. ... For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

This degree of spiritual anguish has led many scholars to conclude that these words cannot be St. Paul describing his own Christian existence. They suggest the speaker is Saul the Pharisee—Paul before his conversion—or a representative of unbelievers in general. However, Paul writes in the first person singular and uses the present tense throughout Romans 7:14–25. So, it seems best to read this as an expression of Paul’s Christian life. And it is one which sits squarely within the “now/not yet” tension he develops in Romans 6–8.

St. Paul identifies the source of his inner turmoil. While he wholeheartedly strives to live according to God’s good and gracious will, the sinful nature dwelling within prohibits him from doing so. Yet, in the midst of his own struggle, St. Paul gives this good news: “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Christ has fulfilled the Law for us. That is the Gospel’s “now.”

These words from the Apostle assure us that such spiritual anxiety is not an unusual experience for the Christian. On the contrary, it is normal. Before Baptism and faith, sin and death used to reign, and the Law only condemned. Becoming a Christian does not end the struggle; instead, it marks the beginning of a life-long battle. The question is not whether you and I will face anxieties, but rather how we will deal with them as believers.

The individual Christian is not alone in this ongoing struggle. All believers in this world remain justified sinners. As a result, conflict within the Body of Christ and between fellow believers should not be a great surprise. Additionally, Jesus paradoxically asserts that believers are in, but not of, the world. Thus the sinful world also continues to challenge Christians. Together all of these

are able to produce tremendous amounts of spiritual anxiety. This side of heaven, these tensions will not be fully resolved.

Spiritual anxiety, however, can have a number of blessed effects. First and foremost, it keeps us relying on the grace of Christ and the work of His Spirit. Like Paul and Luther, we are continually driven to Jesus for His forgiveness and renewal. Also, God can use these struggles to strengthen our faith in Him and our dependence upon Him.

As Jesus told Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). As we approach the end of this church year, these struggles also keep us yearning for Jesus’ second coming. Then we will fully experience all the blessings of His presence.

First John 3:2 actually uses the words “now” and “not yet” to

describe this paradox as well as

its resolution: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Until then, believers are called to live within this tension. God’s grace and Spirit motivate us to continue striving to live according to God’s will, even though we, like Paul, are frustrated by our inability to do so fully because of our sinful flesh. Yet our present life in Christ and our certain hope of heaven empower us to endure the struggle. The Gospel also moves us to forgive, comfort, and encourage fellow believers who are engaged in the same battle.

St. Paul leaves us with this advice: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6–7).



Dr. Michael Middendorf is professor of theology at Concordia University, Irvine, Calif. He wrote *The 'I' in the Storm: A Study of Romans 7*.

# We Are Needed

## Are Lutherans afraid to take on the world?

by Uwe Siemon-Netto

**H**ere's a question for my fellow Lutherans: When did we all become Old Order Mennonites? I am not joking. Only 11 years short of the Reformation's 500th anniversary, I seriously wonder how Lutheran we still are.

How come we don't engage this warped postmodern world in which we live? How come we don't face it head-on? Could it be that Lutherans don't like dirtying their hands much in politics and in the major media, even though this is precisely what our theology tells us we should do?

Some Old Order Mennonites go so far as to *forbid* political office to members.

Well, they are entitled to their views. They don't vote either, neither do they drink and make merry, go to the movies, or laze around South Beach.

But that's not the Lutheran way. Lutherans are expected to follow the Augsburg Confession, which roundly condemns in Article 16 "those who do not locate evangelical perfection in the fear of God and in faith, but place it in forsaking political office."

By the time you read this column, the 2006 mid-

term elections will probably be over. I don't have to be a clairvoyant to predict right

now that, once again, Lutherans will be woefully underrepresented among the 535 members of Congress. They always are. In the 109th Congress, only 20 Lutherans held seats—16 from the ELCA, three from the LCMS, and one solitary man from WELS.

Yet, there were 44 Episcopalians, whose church is a mere quarter as big as the three Lutheran denominations put together.

I'm not whining. I don't blame others. There is no anti-Lutheran pogrom afoot in the United States. Nobody keeps Lutherans out of politics deliberately, as there is nobody preventing Lutherans from reaching the most influential positions in journalism—nobody, that is, than Lutherans themselves.

I have heard it said that the Hate-the-Hun hysteria after World War I sent Lutherans into the catacombs, including Lutherans who are not even of German descent. Is that why there hasn't been a Lutheran president of the United States? Well, Dwight D. Eisenhower was a two-term president. He wasn't a Lutheran, but he was of German origin, and nobody held that against him.

So what's the matter with us? Are we embarrassed by our identity? Sometimes it seems that way. There are Lutherans who want to be just mainline Protestants. Then there are Lutherans who want to be no different from Baptists. Then there are Lutherans who think like the late Rev. James D. Ford, Chaplain of the House of Representatives. "Lutheran, that's boring," he was overheard saying dismissively when somebody mentioned his denomination.



When I was at the seminary, it was fashionable for Lutherans to call themselves beer-drinking Episcopalians. And when I went back to Germany recently, I was stunned that even at a meeting of allegedly confessional Lutherans a participant suggested we had better do away with our two kingdoms doctrine.

Well, if we did that Chaplain Ford would indeed be right: What a boring lot we would be! Imagine Lutherans without the liberating knowledge of being citizens of two realms—the spiritual and the unredeemed secular kingdom, where we must involve ourselves, roll up our sleeves, act according to natural reason, and lovingly serve our neighbors by performing our chores to the best of our abilities.

Imagine living without the knowledge that while we do our duty in this sinful world we always have Christ's right-hand kingdom to turn to for forgiveness and grace! Imagine going through life without the certitude of being at the same time sinners and acquitted! Who would want to get out of bed in the morning under those circumstances? Who would want to take care of their children, mend somebody else's car, drill somebody's tooth, or draw a cool beer for a thirsty man? Who would run for public office—oops, isn't that where Lutherans have become as squeamish as the Old Order Mennonites?

Perhaps at the very moment you are reading this, a groundbreaking forum on the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis will be addressing precisely this issue—the reluctance of Lutherans in America to confront our increasingly complicated reality.

This two-day conference, *Called to Engage the Postmodern World—The Lutheran Voice in Contemporary America*, surpasses the usual scope of a divinity school. Consider the theme of one of the lectures: "Where is Luther now that we need him?" asks Dr. Harold O.J. Brown, a renowned professor at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C., and co-founder of the initiative Evangelicals and Catholics Together.



Indeed, where is Luther? Where is Luther's pragmatic voice in this confused global environment where everybody from radical Muslims to befuddled, wayward Episcopalians seems to be "cooking and brewing the kingdoms together," to use Luther's dictum. He saw the devil at work where this occurs.

We Lutherans have it all—the right doctrine, even the right institutions. We have excellent schools that could prepare the next generation to take on the world. We have universities that could produce the best and most responsible journalists if only they woke up to that need. We have people with money—if only they'd put it where Luther's mouth was.

Luther's voice should come with an American accent, proposes Dr. Mark A. Noll, the great evangelical historian teaching at the University of Notre Dame, who as the keynote speaker at the Concordia Forum emphasizes the "Need for a Lutheran Perspective on Christianity and Politics."

It's more than a dozen years that Noll and similar great minds have told the oldest



Protestant tradition that it was time to open up its theological treasure chest, knowing that if you share spiritual gems they do not diminish but actually multiply.

Here's what Noll says about Luther: "In his voice we hear uncommon resonances of the voice of God." If this is so—and I believe it is—then it is time for all of us to stop avoiding the world, open our ears, listen to Luther, roll up our sleeves, and start dirtying our hands. We are needed.

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# More Than a 'Makeover'



*The faculty and students at a Lutheran school join hands with thousands of community volunteers and with ABC-TV's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" to build a new home for a distraught Michigan family and provide new hope.*

by Paula Schlueter Ross

**M**ove ... that ... bus! Move ... that ... bus! Move ... that ... bus!" chanted the crowd, as thousands of spectators lined a rural road in Armada, Mich., to watch the unveiling of the Gilliam family's new house on a mid-August afternoon.

The bus rolled forward, revealing to the family and a national TV audience the 4,000-square-foot, seven-bedroom, stone-and-wood dream home built by local construction crews and volunteers for the ABC hit television show, "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." (The program was broadcast Oct. 1.)

Maryann Gilliam, a widow with six children ages 9 months to 12 years, screamed with joy along with everyone else. Standing on the road with her children, she couldn't believe what she was seeing. The big, beautiful house was a dream—her husband David's dream—come true.

"I want to thank all of you with all my heart," she said later. "This house gives me such joy, and it's been a long time since I've been filled with joy. David would be all smiles. This is his dream come true, and he would be so happy."

Maryann and her children had come a long way in the past nine months—from deepest despair to unbridled happiness.

God was with her every step of the way, she said. "I know that God pierces hearts and turns lives around, and I'm seeing it every day."

Last November, life was busy, but happy, for the

Gilliam family. Maryann was pregnant with her sixth child, their third girl, and her husband, David, a paramedic and volunteer fireman, was spending his free time remodeling the family's two-bedroom farmhouse.

The couple had bought the tiny, 120-year-old house, situated on an acre of land in a rural area, with the idea that they would transform it, little by little, into their dream home.

But the family's home life took a sudden, sad turn on Christmas Eve, when David, who'd been sick with what he thought was a cold or the flu, had a seizure and died.

Just a few weeks earlier he'd been ecstatic after helping Maryann deliver the couple's youngest child, Naomi, at home. Now the 41-year-old "master of all trades"—a man described by his wife as a "servant" who was "very aggressive" about helping others—was gone.

It was a devastating blow.

Then, Maryann and the kids also fell ill, prompting many visits to the doctor and hospital. Finally, their house was inspected and found to have toxic mold, a likely cause of the family's illnesses and a possible contributor to David's death.

The Gilliams were advised to vacate the house, so the family of seven, now fatherless and home-



The Gilliam family's first home—a 900-square-foot, two-bedroom, 120-year-old farmhouse—was demolished because of toxic mold.

less, and without a steady income, moved in with local relatives.

When David was alive, he and his wife had home-schooled their children. Now, feeling overwhelmed, Maryann pulled out a telephone book to see what Christian schools were nearby.

David's faith was so strong his friends had given him the nickname "Rock." His "first love was God," Maryann said, and he had insisted that the children get a Christian education. So their home-based classes had included prayer and Bible studies.

After his death, finding a good, Christian school for the children was her "biggest burden," Maryann said.

That burden was lightened, though, when she walked through the front door of St. Peter's Lutheran School in Richmond, Mich. The first thing she saw was a big picture of Jesus on the wall, a comfort, she said. The principal was gentle and caring, and offered to waive tuition for all four of her school-age children. He led her down the hall to meet the teachers, who, one by one, stopped their lessons to greet her.

She had wanted a school that would "lovingly embrace my children," she said, and after visiting St. Peter's, she thought, "This is the school."

Everyone made her feel "you're important to us," she said. "I loved it."

George Kovtun was in his first year as principal of St. Peter's when he met Maryann Gilliam. She walked in, told him about her situation, and asked if the school could help, Kovtun recalled.

Right away, he told her there would be no charge for tuition. "I made the decision myself and then I told everybody what I did. You couldn't *not* do it," he said. "That's what Christian education is about—it's educating for eternity. It's not about the money."

Four of the Gilliam children began attending St. Peter's in mid-January—Abigail, in fifth grade; Gabriel, second; Daniel, kinder-

garten; and Ariel, preschool. (The family also includes Peter, now 4, and baby Naomi.) They adjusted "great," said Kovtun. Soon after, teachers made contributions to establish a "lunch fund" for the Gilliam children, providing all four with free hot lunches every school

With Daniel Gilliam in her class, St. Peter's kindergarten teacher, Paulette Mills, was eager to help. Daniel's mother, the widowed mother of six, "touched my heart," she said. "I just thought we had to try. We had to do something."

In her class, she said, "we're



Students in Paulette Mills' kindergarten class at St. Peter's Lutheran School, Richmond, Mich., show off their 15-foot letter to Ty Pennington, host of ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." They sent the banner-size letter, decorated with their handprints, to convince the show to help the Gilliam family. Holding the letter up are Charlene Shuboy, an aide, at left, and Mills.

day. Volunteers took turns driving the children to and from school—some 10 miles each way—and babysitting for Maryann.

Kovtun says the school's faculty and the people of St. Peter's congregation were looking for any way they could help the family. "We just wanted them in our fold," he said. "We wanted them to know that we cared."

That "caring" was taken to the "extreme" a few months later, when the Gilliam family was nominated by friends to receive an "extreme home makeover" from the popular TV show.

always talking about 'Jesus wants me for a helper. I can do something.' This was a way to let the kids see "they could make a difference."

Learning that the Gilliams were among several families being considered for the "home makeover," Mills and her class of 5-year-olds made a 15-foot poster and wrote a letter to convince the show's producers to choose Daniel's family.

"Good morning, Ty [Pennington, host of the program] and friends—We need HELP!" read the poster. "Daniel Gilliam is our friend and we love him. He makes us smile. Daniel has 3 sisters and 2 brothers and his





The Gilliam family reacts to seeing their new home for the first time. From left is "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" host Ty Pennington, Maryann Gilliam, Maryann's sister, Sarah (holding baby Naomi), Peter, Abigail, Daniel, Gabriel, and Ariel.

The Gilliam family's old house was replaced by this 4,035-square-foot, seven-bedroom "dream home," compliments of ABC's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" and thousands of local volunteers.



mom. Daddy went to live with Jesus on Christmas Eve this year. He misses him."

The poster, sent to the show in May, ended with "Thank you for your helping hands. God bless you." It was decorated with colorful handprints from the students.

The following month, the school's seventh- and eighth-graders wrote letters of support for the family, and in July, St. Peter's videotaped its vacation Bible school students and other local children pleading, "Ty, we need your help!" and offering other sentiments on the Gilliams' behalf.

Many, many prayers were offered, Mills said.

On Aug. 7, Pennington and his home-makeover team paid a surprise visit to the family, announced they had been selected for the show, and sent them on a weeklong vacation to Florida.

Over the next few days, the Gilliams' old house was demolished and a new one—four times bigger—was erected in its place. "Project 403," as it was dubbed, involved the TV show's designers and camera crews, two local construction companies, a furniture store, more than 100 contractors, and 3,000-plus volunteers.

Mills spent several days at the work site and described it as a "beehive," with workers everywhere—simultaneously pouring concrete, painting, hammering, you name it.

"It was just unbelievable to see—it was just smiles, smiles, smiles," she said.

Her kindergarten class was invited to fingerprint the washable walls in preschooler Ariel Gilliam's room, but before they got started they sang a "blessing song" and some hymns. When they sang "My God is so great, my God is so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do," several cameramen and one of the show's designers were moved to tears.

"They had to call the makeup artist to redo [the designer's] make-up," Kovtun said.

Amazingly, the new home was completed in just under 54 hours—a record, according to the show's producers. The project included landscaping, new furniture, and appliances—even bicycles and other toys for the children.

"God's hand, I believe, was in everything," said Mills, who noted that dry weather, a full moon, and cooler days made round-the-clock activity possible. "I just know that prayers were answered."

The Gilliams also received a new Ford SUV with room for all seven, full college scholarships for Maryann and the children, and a

check for \$108,434.83 from a local bank to pay off their existing mortgage.

All of that has given her family a brand-new start, says Maryann, and "a lot of healing."

She believes that "God used everybody" in the project, which gave people "a genuine purpose in life, to help others."

Perhaps most important is her own renewed faith. "God is big enough that, even if your husband dies and you have six children, God will provide," she said. The experience was a "good lesson" that, no matter what hardships you encounter, "when you trust Jesus, you're going to be all right."

Now, she says, she "can't limit God" because of His generosity.

And she wants others to know that God isn't just perched on a heavenly throne, watching from a distance, but is "really close to us."

"To me, He's just a whisper away."

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# Stop Grumbling! Give Thanks!

by Andrew Simcak

**W**e are so quick to complain, grumble, and, in general, not be content. We too easily focus on the negatives rather than on the positives in our daily life. God has much to tell us about the problem of complaining and the way to become and remain contented Christians.

His admonitions to His Old Testament people, the Israelites, is just as pertinent to His New Testament people, we Christians. Read 1 Cor. 10:10 where God encourages us *not* to follow the

example of His “chosen people” in the Old Testament.

To get a graphic picture of their negative attitude, read about just a few of the many instances when they complained: Ex. 14:10–12, 15:23–24, and 16:2–3; and Num. 14:1–4, 20:3–5, and 21:5.

Was the Lord pleased with their complaining, their lack of contentment? The answer to that is quite clear in Num. 14:10–12.

When you consider all that God had done for them, it’s difficult to understand how they could be so discontented.

But we New Testament Christians don’t fare any better. None of us is always content in all circumstances of our life. Before we point the accusing finger at God’s people in the Old Testament, who were on their way to the “Promised Land,” we, who by God’s grace are on our journey to God’s promised heavenly home, need to honestly confront our personal problem with grumbling and ask God for His help to be more content in our daily Christian life.

Read St. Paul’s advice in Phil. 4:4–11. What is so amazing about his encouragement is that he says we should “be content *whatever* the

circumstances.” Christians are to be content not only when life is going our way, but also when trials, troubles, and tribulations enter our life or the lives of our loved ones.

Paul certainly knew what trials and troubles were. He experienced many brutal circumstances in his life as a missionary. He lists some of them for us in 2 Cor. 11:23–27. But Paul makes an amazing statement in 1 Thess. 5:16–18: “Give thanks, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Read the rest of these words of joy from Paul.

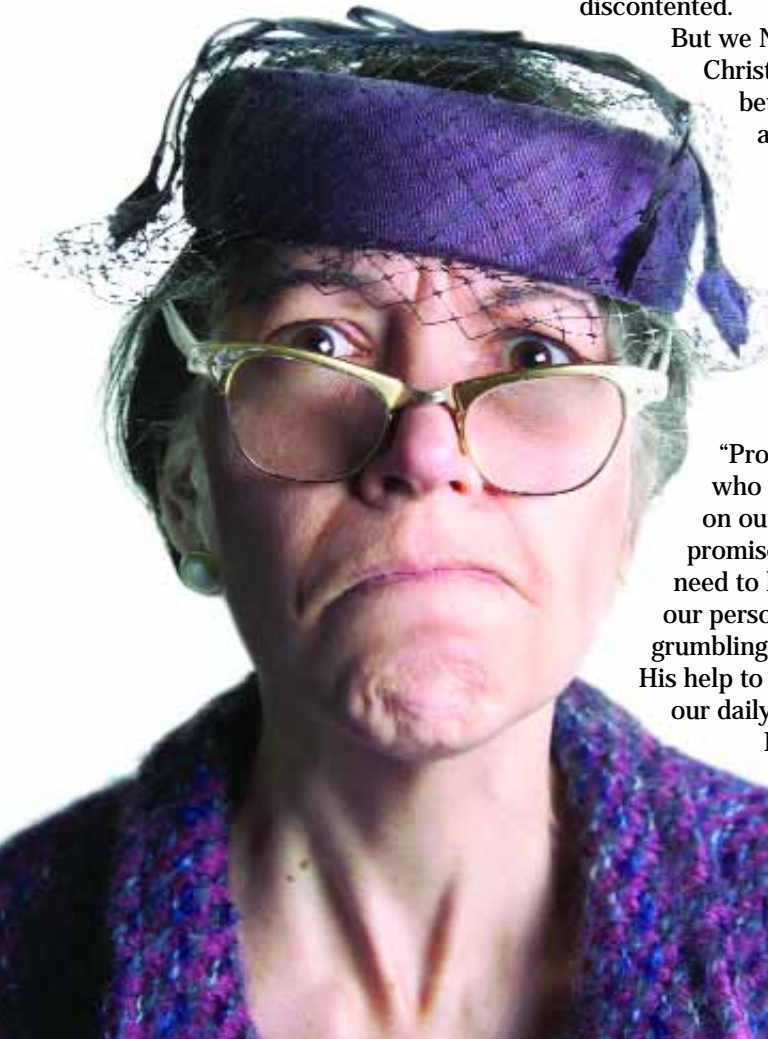
By God’s grace alone, we cannot only be content with whatever the circumstances of our life may be, but also give thanks to God for every and all circumstances in our life.

The driving force that motivates us to be content with what God has given us is the undeserved and unmerited blessings He abundantly showers upon us, as He tells us through His inspired writer of Psalm 103:1–17.

When we consider the eternal blessing of the full and free forgiveness of our sins that the Gospel makes so clear (read Eph. 1:7), and the certain hope of everlasting life (John 3:16) — all made possible because of Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection — we will be strengthened in our faith to be content with whatever God in His wisdom gives us. And we will gladly render our thanks and praises for all He has done for us.

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# Mercy – Lutheran Style!

*Lutherans are people who care about their fellow man — body, mind, and soul — motivated by Christ’s boundless love.*



by Dollie Raabe

**I**n his book *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization*, Alvin J. Schmidt chronicles some of the ways in which Christians have done works of charity through the ages. Early Christians gave voluntarily to a common fund in order to care for widows, the disabled, orphans, persecuted Christians, the poor, and the sick. Every early church had a list of people who needed assistance. Orphanages and hospitals were Christian innovations.

While early Christian charity meant giving out of compassion and expecting nothing in return, the Romans considered this illogical, a sign of weakness, and cause for suspicion. For Romans, it was pointless to waste one’s valuable time and energy on someone who had nothing to give in return.

In fact, the Roman philosopher Plautus (254–184 B.C.) had said, “You do a beggar bad service by giving him food and drink; you lose what you give and prolong his life for more misery.”

In contrast, Christians showed compassion toward the unlovable and the helpless not because they deserved it, but because Christians saw them as people like themselves—created by the same God and graciously redeemed by the same Lord Jesus Christ. As Christians have freely received, so they freely gave.

## Our motivation

When the “social gospel” movement began during the late 19th century, its advocates said that by working for social and political change, Christians could bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. They thought of the gospel as social and political ethics.

The Scriptures do not support this motivation for good works. Rather, they teach that faith comes by hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, and His life, death, and resurrection for sinners.



Rachel Pack (left), the volunteer coordinator for Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church Meals on Wheels in North Royalton, Ohio, delivers to one of the homebound clients.

The unique mission given to the church is to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the trinitarian name, teaching them the Scriptures, and administering the Lord’s Supper and the Office of the Keys. This is the God-given task of bringing Jesus Christ and His gifts of forgiveness and eternal life to all people.

We should not confuse the Gospel of Jesus Christ with ethics and with human care.

Nevertheless, the church *does* help others with their temporal needs in the name of Jesus Christ. Christians do this on an individual level, and the Church has always done this on a corporate level.

Today, there are 125 organizations recognized by LCMS World Relief and Human Care that provide human-care ministry throughout the United

## Strength and Hope

With the help of a grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, *Fuerza y Esperanza* (Strength and Hope) began serving the north side of Fort Worth, Texas, in July, 2005. Strength and Hope is a Christ-centered recovery program for people who struggle with addictive and compulsive behaviors, or destructive relationships. It offers help for the entire family and trains the members to become leaders.

Leticia Pierce directs the recovery fellowship at *Cristo Rompió Las Cadenas Iglesia Luterana*, a ministry of Strength and Hope. Rev. Ed Auger, missionary pastor, says Pierce is one of a core group of humble, dedicated servants who wish to be used by God to bring hope and healing to the wounded.

Rev. Auger adds, “The honesty, humility, open-mindedness, and acceptance that characterize [this] recovery fellowship are contagious and contribute to the overall sense of spiritual safety and security in our worshiping community. This is Christians reaching out to wounded people with the compassion of Christ.”

## Not Invisible

Eugene, Ore., offers community programs to help those with advanced Alzheimer’s disease (AD), but there were no services for individuals struggling with the early stages of the disease until members of Messiah Lutheran Church stepped up to meet that need. Using funds from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, they began Promoting Independence Everyday,

Program Director Andrea Gillispie says that people diagnosed with dementia seem to become invisible. Even their doctors tend to look through them and direct conversations to their caregivers.

Gillispie oversees a staff and volunteers who offer patients and caregivers a variety of activities and opportunities to socialize. The program helps keep families together, and helps patients maintain independence as long as possible.

## Meals with Eyes

Five years ago, parish nurse Nancy Langenderfer learned that no one was providing meals for the homebound of North Royalton, Ohio. So she and others at Royal Redeemer Lutheran Church got busy researching Meals on Wheels programs. They contracted with a local nursing center to prepare the meals, and local church volunteers offered the wheels.

With a grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, the Royal Redeemer Meals on Wheels began with four customers in 2001. To date, 160 long- and short-term clients have taken part in the program.

Under the direction of Mary Shuster, care ministry coordinator, volunteers deliver meals and serve as extra eyes watching out for clients’ well-being.

— D.R.

States. This work includes childcare, counseling for children and families, residential and other care for the disabled and the elderly, adoption services, prison ministries, emergency aid and shelter, housing assistance, hospice services, pregnancy counseling, refugee settlement, chaplaincy, addiction treatment, domestic violence treatment, domestic and international disaster assistance, and more.

*The NonProfit Times* magazine reported that Lutherans comprise the largest not-for-profit network in the United States—bigger than the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, and the YMCA.

According to Lutheran Services in America (LSA), an alliance of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and their related social-ministry organizations, there are 300 health and human-service organizations recognized by the LCMS and/or the ELCA. Together they served one in 50 Americans in 2005 with a quarter of a million staff and volunteers and a collective operating budget exceeding \$9 billion.

What moves us to devote so much time, energy, and resources in acts of mercy? According to Rev. Matthew Harrison, executive director of LCMS World Relief and Human Care: “Love, care, and concern for those in need are actions motivated by the Gospel, when faith apprehends the righteousness of Christ and His merits, unto eternal life. The Gospel thus laid hold of, produces love. Love seeks and serves the neighbor.”

In John 15, Jesus tells His followers, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.” Then He says, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

His love for us unlovable, rebellious sinners took Him all the way to an ugly, humiliating crucifixion to offer Himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His love for us moved Him to live the holy, obedient life in our place and to reckon that holiness to us. And His love for us not only frees us *from*



Rev. Johann Friedrich Buenger, a Saxon immigrant, was pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, St. Louis, and founder of the Lutheran Hospital and the Lutheran Orphans' Home.

bondage to sin, but it also frees us *for* a different life.

## LCMS history of mercy

The LCMS has been involved in mercy almost from its inception in 1847. Rev. Johann Friedrich Buenger, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Louis, exemplified Christ's love of others. His influence on the Synod's early work in human care was profound.

Buenger's advocacy for those in need of bodily and spiritual care resulted in the founding of Lutheran Hospital



of St. Louis in 1858, and Lutheran Orphans' Home in 1867.

Buenger's passion for serving and his talent for inspiring and recruiting laypeople helped set the tone for Synod's humanitarian work. In the 25 years following the opening of the Lutheran Orphans' Home, 11 more Lutheran orphanages and 25 Lutheran hospitals were established throughout the United States.

Later, Rev. Fredrick William Herzberger was the Missouri Synod's first “city missionary.” His 30-years work in St. Louis as pastor to the poor, the sick, the elderly, orphans, various ethnic groups, illegitimate children, and those in prison was the foundation of institutional chaplaincy.

In 1902, Herzberger, Rev. August Schlechte from

*(Continued on Page 22)*

# Touching children with mercy

Just as the needs of orphans spurred some of our Synod's earliest ministries after the Civil War, care for today's children who suffer from illness, neglect, and homelessness are at the heart of this year's LCMS World Relief and Human Care Sunday.

Traditionally observed the Sunday before Thanksgiving, this "synodwide event for worldwide caring" benefits many projects that help children in the clear name of Jesus.

"Through my travels, I see how many of today's needy are children," said LCMS World Relief/Human Care Executive Director Rev. Matthew Harrison. "Heartbreaking numbers of little ones struggle with challenges most parents can hardly imagine."

A sampling of LCMS World Relief/Human Care "body and soul" projects includes work in:

Kenya, where a new Lutheran orphanage cares for children who lost their parents to AIDS and a clinic treats seriously ill orphans.

Latvia, where, in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, diaconia centers get youngsters from abusive homes off the streets and into after-school care that includes a good meal and character-building activities.

The Dominican Republic, where children with developmental disabilities have endured dismal conditions. Today, a Lutheran pastor and an outreach worker are raising awareness about these youngsters' needs and abilities, and planting that country's first LCMS congregations.

LCMS World Relief and Human Care is the Synod's mercy arm that is completely supported by caring Christians. To learn more, call (800) 248-1930, Ext. 1380 or 1381, or visit <http://worldrelief.lcms.org>.

— Kim Krull

Chicago, and Rev. Frederick Ruhland of Buffalo, N.Y., founded the Associated Lutheran Charities—soon to become the social ministry engine of our Synod.

In 1903, Herzberger helped found the Evangelical Lutheran Society of Missouri, a child-placement program to help the homeless city children he met. It was modeled after the Lutheran Children's Friend Society of Milwaukee.

In 1954, this organization merged with the Lutheran Orphans' Home to form Lutheran Children's Services—now called Lutheran Family & Children's Services.

Herzberger also helped create the Lutheran Deaconess Association in 1919.

Synod's world-relief efforts began in 1893, and the General Board of Relief formed in 1914. Now called World Relief and Human Care, the department's mission has always been serving in mercy, motivated by Christ's love.

## As Natural As Breathing

Christ's love is at the heart of mercy. In large congregations of bustling cities and in the small congregations surrounded by farms, Lutherans serve their neighbors in love. We rejoice in

the compassion that Christ showed us. The better we understand that compassion, the more we realize that it's not ours to horde away. Caring for both the eternal and temporal needs of others is as natural as breathing.

That's mercy—Lutheran style!

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Dollie Raabe is a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Des Peres, Mo.



Heidi Bishop (left) and Becky Antio spend time with children attending the Day Center for Street Children in Kuldiga, Latvia. Both are deaconess students at Concordia University Chicago.



Barbara Below, social ministry organizations director for LCMS World Relief and Human Care, cares for one of the children in a residential treatment center for developmentally disabled youth in Santiago, Dominican Republic.



# Cause for Thanksgiving

Just yesterday, I was looking at some photographs that were taken at a district convention this summer. They reminded me once again of how richly God blesses us—in

this case through lives of Christian service that touch us and others with the love of God in Jesus Christ. What a cause for thanksgiving!

Christians naturally give thanks every day for all the blessings that God pours out on them. But with Thanksgiving Day being an important civic holiday in our country, we are reminded especially in November that it is with gratitude that we receive the bounty of God's hand.

No matter our circumstances in life, every one of us is richly blessed by God. Greatest among our blessings is God's gracious gift of saving faith in Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of all our sins, and eternal life. "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever" (Ps. 106:1).

That's why my thoughts turned to thanksgiving when I looked at the photographs, which were taken during the Minnesota South District Convention in June. The center of attention in the photos is Gladys Deye, the 90-year-old widow of veteran pastor Rev. Armin Deye, who died in January at age 92.

Other district conventions, in thanksgiving to God, also remembered veterans of the cross who had died since the previous convention and honored their



Surrounding Gladys Deye, seated, at a reception during the Minnesota South District Convention to honor the families of church workers who had died since the previous convention, are Rev. William Otte, left; her daughters, Kathy Riemer and Dottie Snow; and LCMS President Gerald Kieschnick. Otte, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Rochester, Minn., has been a friend of the Deye family since childhood.

families. Rightly so. Scripture tells us, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

Dottie Snow, one of Pastor Deye's daughters, sent the photos with a letter. She wrote, "At 90 years of age Mama traveled over 600 miles specifically to attend the Communion service to receive the Certificate of Appreciation for her husband's life of service ....

"Though a massive effort on our part, it was not so great as watching her gather up the emotional and physical energy to stand up from her wheelchair for recognition at the worship service," she continued. "It's a wonderful gesture on your part. I do hope all of the districts do something like this because you know the wives, parents, and children did considerable work to support the minister in our family, too."

Throughout our church body, pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, deaconesses, directors of Christian outreach, and others who are in full-time church work are serving others by proclaiming the love of God in word and deed. Their families are supporting them and doing the same, as are the many, many faithful lay men and women who day in and day out, week in and week out, month in and month out—you get the picture—go about their lives of service to God in their own unique ways, sometimes quite visibly, sometimes very quietly.

It is in thanksgiving for all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ that Christians share God's love in word and deed with others. Our church body has incorporated this into its 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."

The psalmist put it this way: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done" (Ps. 105:1).

Jerry Kieschnick

John 3:16–17

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

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