

EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT
CHURCH (GCEPC)®,
LUTHERAN EVANGELICAL
PROTESTANT CHURCH (LEPC)®

**BREAKING
NEWS!**

The Tomb is
Empty!

He is Risen, He is
Risen indeed!

Film at eleven, ED

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ISSUE**

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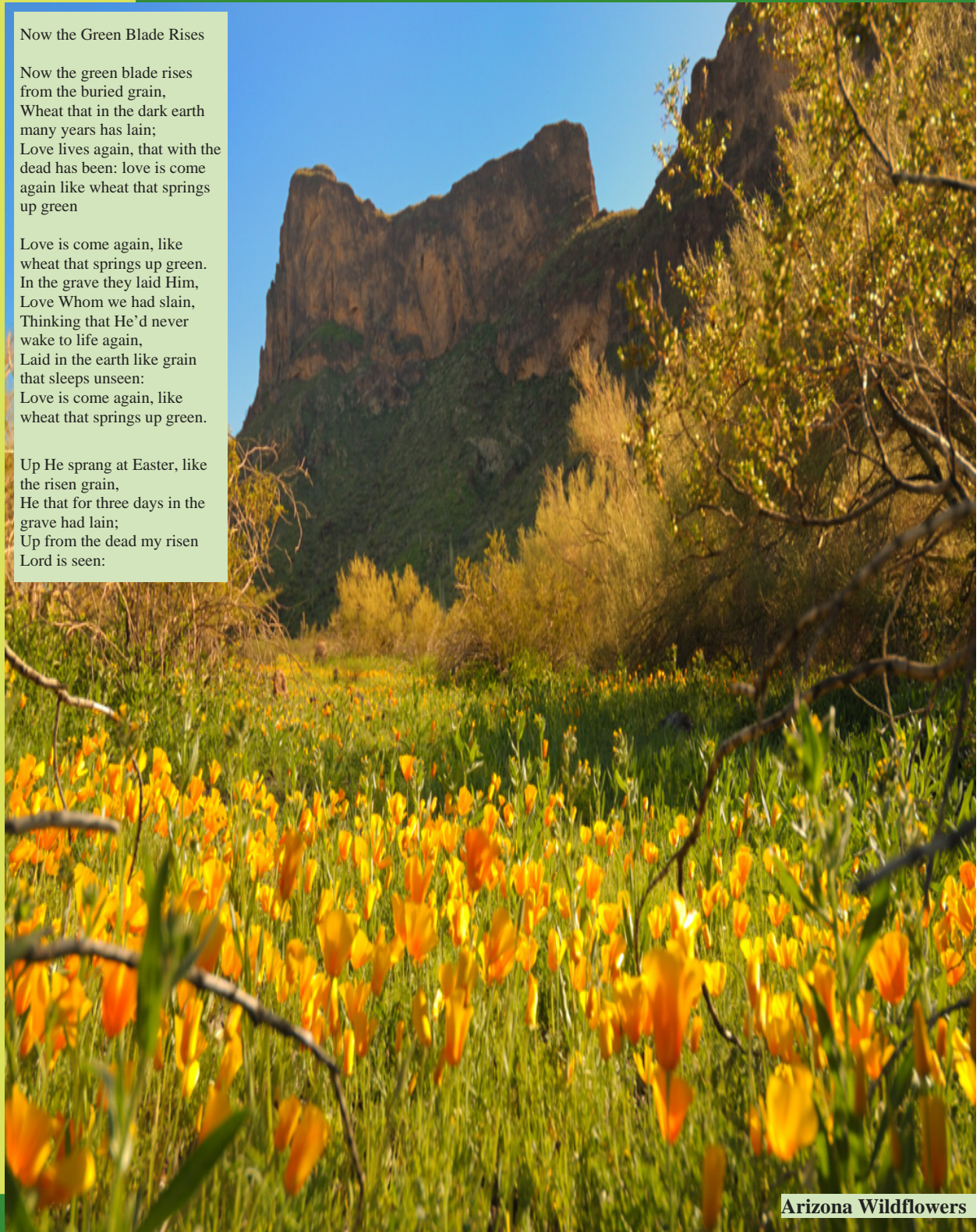
FIRST ISSUE 1917

Now the Green Blade Rises

Now the green blade rises
from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth
many years has lain;
Love lives again, that with the
dead has been: love is come
again like wheat that springs
up green

Love is come again, like
wheat that springs up green.
In the grave they laid Him,
Love Whom we had slain,
Thinking that He'd never
wake to life again,
Laid in the earth like grain
that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again, like
wheat that springs up green.

Up He sprang at Easter, like
the risen grain,
He that for three days in the
grave had lain;
Up from the dead my risen
Lord is seen:



Arizona Wildflowers



Evangelical Protestant
Church (GCEPC)® Inc.,

Lutheran Evangelical
Protestant Church (LEPC)®,

We Believe

1. The Holy Scriptures, in the original tongues, is the inspired and inerrant word of God. (Matthew 4:4, 2 Timothy 3:16,17)

2. There is one God, eternal and self-existent, Creator and Ruler of the universe, and manifested through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (John 1:18, Matthew 3:16-17) We are Trinitarian.

3. Jesus Christ is truly divine and truly human having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. (Matt.1: 18)

4. Jesus Christ died on the cross and shed His blood as a Sacrifice

for our sins; He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High. (1 John 2:2)

5. Humankind was created in the image of God, but fell into sin causing separation from God. (Gen. 3:1-24)

6. Salvation has been provided through Jesus Christ for all; and those who repent and believe on Him are born again of the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of eternal life and become the children of God. (John 1:10)

7. Water baptism identifies us with the death and burial of Christ and that we should arise to

walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19-20)

8. We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ, to convict of sin, to enable the believer to live a godly life, and to empower the Church to carry the gospel into all the world. (Matthew 12:31, Acts 1:8.)

9. In the personal and visible return of Jesus Christ for His Church. (Matthew 24:30, Rev 1:7)

10. In the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved and everlasting separation from God of all those who reject Jesus Christ. (John 1:10-13, Rev 20:11-15)

GCEPC "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2: 8

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The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin
Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and
was buried; he descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he
is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come
again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the
communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the
resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

The Evangelical Protestant Journal "Kirchenbote" (Church Messenger) was established in 1885,

Gustav Schmidt became editor. In 1917, the German Evangelical churches in the Pittsburgh area began publication of a monthly entitled The Evangelical Protestant. (Archives Smithfield UCC)

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Editor Rev. Steve Bacon

Bishop's Page



Greetings in this Holy Season!

We are anticipating a good new spring and following up with the things that the Lord has spoken to us for the EPC GCEPC/LEPC. Launch out into the deep! This was our Conference theme but it is not new to us. We have been hearing this from the Lord since October of 2012. This will be our ongoing direction and desire for the future.

God's desire is always that we know Him more, that we reach further and higher than we believe that we can. He wants us to challenge ourselves to believe His word. He challenges us to hear His voice and walk by His Spirit. He wants us to be creative and be willing at times to draw outside of the lines and think outside and "live" outside of the box. He does not want us to be satisfied with the "status quo."

I fully believe that God is getting ready to bring a new day to His Church, the called out ones. He wants the church that he has envisioned and that He is building. He wants the

church that is built on the revelation that He is the Christ the Son of the Living God. It is very easy to move away from that simple dynamic but yet Jesus said this is the rock that he will build his church on and that by revelation. While we can think in our minds that what Jesus said is true, the change and revelation must come to our heart. We hear him speak and our life direction changes, our thoughts change our way of living and moving changes. .

Jesus said,
"Who do you
say
that I am?"

When we believe we know that Christ is the Son of the Living God and this knowledge comes to us the same way that it came to Peter, by revelation. It is not revealed to us by flesh and blood but by the Heavenly Father, Jesus' Father, Our Father.

In this Holy Season we are reminded that we are dust. The Excellence of God in using dust to form us becomes a focus but we are dust formed into vessels that carry the Holy Treasure of Christ in us, the Hope of Glory. He has chosen us as His place to

reside. We therefore must be mindful always of His Presence and desire for us.

God's peace to you from "you are dust and to dust you shall return "to the glory of the Resurrection Day! May you walk with God in the revelation knowledge that you are His child and Jesus our Savior, Lord, Elder Brother is the only begotten Son of the Living God as revealed to us by His Father and Our Father.

My greatest desire for all of our ministers is that they would have a close walk with Our Lord, learning His ways, hearing His voice, knowing Him.

IHS,

Bishop Nancy Drew



“The Priestly Blessing”

By Bishop Jessica Johnston, Spirit Soul and Body Ministries



My prayer and blessing for you is that you will discover and uncover the mysteries of God in His ways and His word. I pray for you a revelation of His grace in your life and that all lessons imparted to you through your message will become revelatory teaching for the flock of God.



What a privilege it is as priest to speak the priestly/Aaronic blessing over the people of God. God instructed Moses in Numbers 6:22-26 to have Aaron and his sons speak this blessing over the people of Israel. It was their responsibility and privilege to be the mouthpiece of God in speaking His blessing. In the day of the First and Second temples this blessing could only be

spoken by a priest. The Priest would stand facing the congregation with their arms raised. In the *One New Man* bible compiled by Rev. Bill Morford he teaches us about the true and deeper Hebrew meaning within each phrase of the blessing. I would like to share his teaching with you here.

“Verse 24 contains just three Hebrew words. The translation is:

The Lord will bless you.

This is two Hebrew words. The second word is “the Lord” and the first is “He will bless you” and speaks of material blessing, for life, health, and prosperity per Deut. 28:1-14. The “you” is singular referring both to the individual believer and the congregation as a single, unified body.

And He will keep you

This is the third Hebrew word in the verse and means to guard your material blessings, to protect your life and health, to protect you against all evil, sickness, poverty, and calamity. Again the “you” is singular.

Verse 25 contains five Hebrew words. The translation is:

The Lord will make His face to shine upon you

“To shine upon you” is the first Hebrew word and this word for shine is also the word for light. It is a symbol for happiness, purity, friendship. God’s face shining upon you symbolizes the outpouring of Divine love and salvation, Ps. 80:20 saying Restore us, O Lord God of Hosts! Cause Your face to shine upon us, so we will be saved! This represents the gift of knowledge and moral insight as well as friendship with God. In verse 25 “you” is also singular.

And He will be gracious to you

He will give you grace in the eyes of your fellow men. He will make you lovable and beloved in the eyes of others – believers. You will be respected by the world, applying both to the individual and to Israel as a nation. The Lord will establish you as a holy

(Continued on page 5)

“The Priestly Blessing”

people to Himself, as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and walk in His ways. And all people of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they will stand in awe of you. (Deut. 28:9,10)

Verse 26 contains seven Hebrew words, The translation is:

The Lord will lift His countenance to you

This is four Hebrew words saying He will turn His attention to you. Again “you” is singular. For Him to turn His attention to you, lifting His head to search you out to cast His loving care upon you.

And He will establish your Shalom

This is three Hebrew words and the word usually translated give (give you peace) means much more than that. It means to set, to establish you in shalom, The Lord does not just give it and leave it at that, but He sees to it that you are firmly established in Shalom. Shalom the word normally translated peace, means health, welfare, security, justice and tranquility, also freedom from all disaster. A Hebrew scholar gave the best English translation of Shalom: “No good thing is withheld”. Y’shua gave us this in John 14:27, saying “Shalom aleikhem.”” ©2011 by Rev. William J. Morford

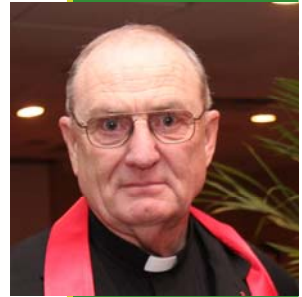


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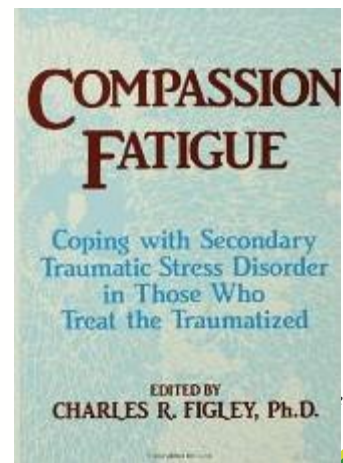
Compassion Fatigue and Serving as We Are Called

By Rev Dr. Thomas Peavy

Over the past several years I have been involved in teaching and providing programs for the National Alliance on Mental Illness to train Peace Officers and others in Crisis Intervention. More specifically, I teach in the areas of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Developmental Disabilities. Though different, these two areas are elements of crisis for the family as well as those professionals called upon to assist in times of need. As I have given thought to the roles we as Pastors, Chaplains, Comforters, and those simply called to be witness to another's life event, I have gained a perspective on the toll caring can have upon those who provide a pastoral presence, a listening ear and prayerful intervention to God's Children. As I hear my Brothers and Sisters in Christ tell me of their encounters and their personal life events, I think of the expression by Victor Frankl **"That which is to give light Must endure burning."** Considering our calling and what we know of the sacrifice of our Lord, I can see much in this quote which we may need to hear personally as well as looking for in our brothers and sisters in ministry.



God has called us apart to be His Priest, Ministers, Chaplains and Shepherds of Flocks. As with His ministry, the path is one where we encounter many needs and hurts that afflict his children. As we go about our calling, we find ourselves confronted with our 'Silent Witness' to another's life events and we offer our help as we can. Many times what we give as His servant calls us to a situation where ours is a place of Secondary Traumatization. We may witness or gain knowledge of an event ... learning about unexpected death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a member of our congregations, colleague, family member or others close to us. When our response is one involving intrusive thoughts of the person, imagery as if we were the person, dreams of the event or person and a feeling of increased threat, it may be that we are experiencing a Secondary Traumatic Stress which can lead to Burnout. This type of Fatigue plus Burnout is what Dr. Charles Figley identified as Compassion Fatigue (Figley, 1995)



Compassion Fatigue and Serving as We Are Called

By Rev Dr. Thomas Peavy

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2.

Secondary Traumatic Stress Symptoms may include:

Arousal signs such as Fear/ Anxiety signs such as Obsessive thoughts, Sleep Problems, Irritability/easily angered, Impulsiveness and Dis-ease. Also included many be Compulsive Behavior such as Poor Concentration, Weight Loss/Gain, Somatization eg. Hypertension, digestive issues and other physical manifestations, and immune system/lowered resistance to infections.

Avoidance signs such as Procrastination, Dread, Depression, Hopelessness, self-medication relational problems, isolation blaming and a sense of entitlement.

From these one may find a feeling of chronic fatigue an increase in perceived threat. The warning signal here is Burnout. "Burnout is a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment" (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998; 2003). According to Gentry & Baranowsky, (1998) Burnout is "the chronic condition of perceived demands outweighing perceived resources. The body's response to this burnout is a nervous system response which can lead to chronic reactions and behaviors.

The good news in this is one can heal from and take steps to insulate themselves from the effects of Compassion Fatigue. We as Believers know healing and we have seen it in our personal life and the lives of others. We also know the source of that healing and we accept it as a deivein gift. We also know that healing comes to us from practicing and living a life God has called us to live and in that we understand the need for self-regulation and relaxation. We also understand the need to change perceptions as His plan is revealed to us.

Knowing these two processes, we have the foundation for helping in our healing. It has been said that "When the Pain of staying the Same is greater than the Fear of Change We will Change." I believe the Holy Spirit is the motivator in this and that the discomfort we may experience is His Voice saying to us "Care for Yourself and Change as I so guide."

3.

As we have future issues, I will offer additional observations and resources as considerations of how we may care for ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ as we minister and go about His calling to us. In all things we continue to know that Prayer and heeding His voice of direction is foundational to our ability to bring comfort, and mending to ourselves and his children.

All Praises Be to Him as He guides us in our Effort.

(Continued on page 8)



Mary Magdalene was then sent by Jesus Himself to tell the disciples of the Good News that he is alive! She was the first to be able to say, "I have seen the Lord." Both Luke 24:1-12 and John 20:1-9 report that Mary saw the risen Christ and then went to tell the apostles.

Mary Magdalene is mentioned more frequently in the New Testament than any other woman with the exception of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Jesus traveled throughout Israel with his 12 disciples and later his 70 disciples whom we also read about in scripture. There were women who were listed by name with the disciples as followers of Christ. Mary Magdalene was one of those women.

Mary Magdalene traveled with Jesus and the disciples. Mary was a witness to the works of Christ on a daily basis and to the crowds of people who followed Jesus from place to place listening to his teachings and watching for his miracles. It can be reasoned that Mary was among those followers of Jesus like Peter, James, John, and others who Jesus commissioned to ministry saying ""And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give."Matt 10:7-8.

It is significant that Mary Magdalene is listed in all four of the synoptic gospels as a follower, disciple, of Christ. She is present in every account of the empty tomb after the resurrection. We know that this Mary was ministered to by Jesus and seven demons were "gone out of her." She was one who had freely received from Jesus and could freely give because of it. Mary M. was someone who had not only followed Christ and believed His teachings but she was a woman with "an experience." She knew the power of her Deliverer; because of Jesus she lived a changed life.

Mary Magdalene: Apostle to the Apostles

by Bishop Nancy Drew

Scripture says that Mary M. is one who helped support the ministry of Jesus. She "provided for them" out of her resources. Mary was a person who had the ability in material ways to care for herself and for others. Though scripture does not say what her vocation was, they do indicate that she was a woman of independent means who chose to use her resources to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God to others. The Greek word *diakoneo* meaning "to provide" is used of Mary M. and indicates "to serve, wait on, minister to as deacon," and it was used in the early Christian community to describe "eucharistic table service and proclamation of the word" (Jane Schaberg, *Women's Bible Commentary*, 376). Mary Magdalene "was a prominent disciple of Jesus who followed him in Galilee and to Jerusalem. She is always listed first in groups of named female disciples" indicating her prominence in the group. (*The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 884).

Mary Magdalene was with Jesus in Jerusalem at Passover. She was there. She saw the whip marks on his back where his flesh was torn away, the bruises on his face and body. She stood at the foot of the cross. She saw the blood from his hands and feet. She stayed, watching from afar off but nearby. She was there when Jesus told the penitent thief that He would be in paradise with Him that day. She heard when Jesus called out to his Father. She saw him when he died. She watched as his body was taken down before the Sabbath and she knew where he would be carried so that she could be among those who would go to take care of his body in the early morning hours following the Sabbath. Mary M.

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Mary Magdalene: Apostle to the Apostles

(Continued from page 9)

would be one of those bringing expensive perfume for his burial rites. This going to the tomb, this willingness of service, this love for her master, her dedication would be the entrance way to the most important event that Mary Magdalene would become known for in scripture.

Mary Magdalene's constant presence near Jesus positioned her to be the first to receive an appearance of the risen Lord. In John 20 she is the first to the tomb on Sunday morning, and the first person to whom Christ reveals himself after the resurrection. Our faith as Christians rests upon the truth of Christ's resurrection. Our access to this most important truth, this foundation of our faith and eternal life comes through the witness of those who saw it happen and experienced the Resurrected Presence of Jesus the Christ. As the first to encounter Jesus, to experience him, to know that Jesus was alive from the dead just as he said makes the status and importance of Mary Magdalene very high indeed.

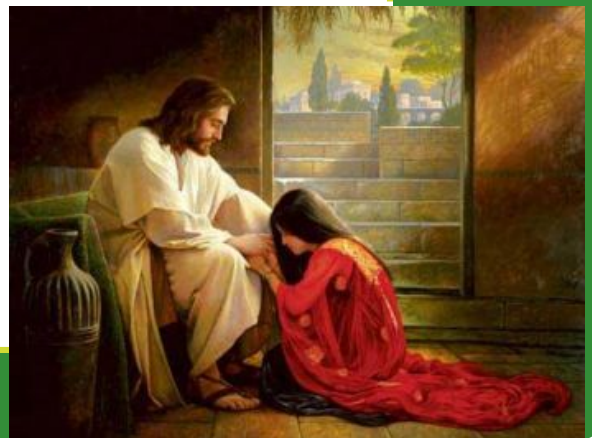
After Mary Magdalene viewed the empty tomb she ran to tell the disciple of what she had seen. They came and saw the empty tomb but left perplexed shortly thereafter. But not Mary M. Mary M. stayed. There is something about Mary Magdalene's willingness to wait and it is a waiting that comes so naturally to her. Again, she was close by to the last place that she knew her Savior had been. She stood there weeping and longing to know where Jesus was and what had happened to his body then a most wonderful thing happened: "...*she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away."* Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher) John 20:14-15

Mary Magdalene was then sent by Jesus Himself to tell the disciples of the Good News that he is alive!. She was the first to be able to say, "I have seen the Lord." Both Luke 24:1-12 and John 20:1-9 report that Mary saw the risen Christ and then went to tell the apostles.

"Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her."

Mary did just as she had been told by Jesus. She joyfully, without worry of what they might think or whether they believed her not told Peter and the others, "I have seen the Lord." This is why we remember Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene was chosen by Jesus to be the first person to give the message of the resurrection. He made a bold statement in his choice. Hippolytus, a bishop of the third century, called Mary Magdalene "The Apostle to the Apostles." Mary Magdalene's witness began the message of Resurrection. It is ours to continue and be His witnesses of the good news of the Resurrection to the "utter most parts of the world" and lo, He, the Risen Christ is with us always.

References: Matthew 28:1-10, Luke 8:1-3, Luke 23:49, Luke 23:55-56, Luke 24:1-11, Mark 15:40-1, Mark 16:1-11, John 19:25, John 20:1-18





LOVE2020 A Project of the Mission America Coalition. The EPC/ GCEPC LEPC is a member of the Mission America Coalition.

It's a popular saying, often heard on TV, at concerts, "show some love" then it is usually followed by applause. To really show love, give love, to love requires a great deal more than clapping our hands, slaps on the back, whistles and shouts of approval. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." This is the love that we hungry to find.

PRAY SHARE CARE

LOVE2020 is a call to followers of Jesus everywhere to be loving others by living a simple and powerful lifestyle of praying, caring and sharing the love of Jesus Christ with those around them in deed and word. Every person should know God loves and cares deeply for him or her. We are the ones, you are the one, to let them know.

Resources are available for your inspiration and involvement at: <http://love2020.com/love2020/#Resources> Show some love!

**“You are My friends if you do what I command you...“This I command you, that you love one another.”
John 15: 13-17**

"God Still Loves You"



Every word you say for the Kingdom of God counts!

Read this inspiring story about how God captured the heart of olympic champion Kelly Clark through overhearing the simple words, "God still loves you." God promises that his word "shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Kelly Clark won bronze at this year's Winter Olympics, the only snowboarder ever to win three medals. (She won gold in 2002 and bronze in 2010). When she won her gold medal, she was the youngest member of the U.S. Olympic team. Three years later, she won first place at the World Cup. But her life was as dark as her athletic prospects were

bright."I achieved the highest in my sport. I was famous," she says. "I had money. I had an Olympic gold medal. Everything that anyone could have wanted, and I found out that wasn't what I was looking for." She turned to drinking and partying, but but nothing filled the void in her soul.

(Continued on page 12)

WITHOUT LOVE WE HAVE NOTHING

What happened? "I had spiraled into this depression and into this place that was just real dark. I was at this contest, and I was staying by myself. I spent the morning writing about how I didn't want to live anymore and how it wouldn't even matter." She was standing at the bottom of the pipe (the semi-circular snow-covered area where athletes in her sport compete) when four words changed her life: "This girl comes down, and she's crying 'cause she fell on both of her runs and she didn't qualify. This other girl goes up to her, [and] I'm standing there. They didn't know anybody was listening. She was like, 'Hey, it's all right. God still loves you.' I was blown away. **If there's a God who loves me, like, I need to know Him.**"



"She was staying at my hotel, and I found out what room number she was in. So that night I knocked on her door. She told me about having a relationship with Jesus, and she started telling me that was what it was about. My Creator wanted a real relationship with me, and He loved me very much."

After thinking about what she heard, Kelly made a decision: "I gave my life to the Lord that day. It was pretty cool. The Lord really apprehended me at that point." How has her faith changed her life? "Now having a relationship with the Lord, I find that there's a lot more freedom in snowboarding for me. I'm just so in love with Him. Every time I think about Him I have to tell Him I love Him 'cause I'm head over heels. He makes me smile."

The next time you're discouraged about your apparent inability to change the moral direction of our culture, remember Kelly Clark's story. "God still loves you," overheard at a snowboarding competition, led her to become one of the most visible and vibrant Christian witnesses in athletics today. God promises that his word "shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).



So speak his truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and expect the Holy Spirit to use your words and life to change someone's eternal trajectory. Is there a greater privilege in life?

(Thanks to: Denison Forum.org Written by Jim Denison)

Hello, Do You Have A Moment To Tell Me About Jesus Christ?

COMMENTARY • OPINION • ISSUE 50•06 • FEB 13, 2014

BY DONALD SPRIGG



Hello, sorry to bother you, but I was hoping I could borrow just a minute of your time. You see, lately I've been thinking about whether there's something more to life, something I've been missing. There are even times when I feel like I've lost my way and may never find it again. So while I really don't want to intrude, I was wondering if you might have a moment to tell me about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It won't take long.

Would you mind coming in and sitting down? Just to speak with me for a little bit? If now's not a good time, don't worry. You can come back. Do you have a pamphlet or something? It would be great to have some information about how God is always there for me. Though I suppose it isn't possible that God could be there for me all the time, is it?

Anyhow, if you have some literature—even a whole book—maybe you could leave it with me so that I can look it over, and then you could stop by and talk to me about it later, whenever it's convenient for you. Better yet, is there a place in my community I could visit to find out more about the sacrifice Jesus made for me? I'd be interested in learning about something like that.

Also, I haven't heard the good news, but I certainly would like to.

While I'm sure you can't stay long, I just wanted to say that somewhere deep inside, a part of me believes that, hey, maybe God has a wonderful plan for my life. Do you think He has great things in store for me? And is there really a heaven awaiting us after this life? I'd enjoy hearing more about your faith, particularly if you have any thoughts about God's love, and whether it's everlasting and pure. It might be, it might not be, I haven't a clue. Would you let me know?

I mean, if I were to die today, where would I spend eternity? I have no idea.

Also, and I know you have places to go and things to do so I'll try not to take up too much more of your time here, but would you have just a couple more minutes to explain to me how prayer works? I know it can't be as easy as simply sitting down and starting a conversation with God. And maybe it's a moot point in my case—after all, why would He want anything to do with someone as flawed and sinful as me?

If you're comfortable discussing it, would you mind telling me whether you understand where I'm coming from, or have ever felt the way I do? In fact, it might be helpful if you told me a brief anecdote about a time when you personally doubted God's love but then saw the light. Assuming you have such an anecdote, of course. Did you ever doubt if He was real? Maybe you turned to alcohol and drugs. If so, I'd love for you to talk to me about that.

Especially if there was a point in your life at which you hit rock bottom before turning things around.

Anyway, I understand you're very busy, but take some time to think it over, and whenever you're ready to give me a few minutes of your time, I'll be here, waiting to talk about my salvation.

Here, leave me a card I can reach you at.

<http://www.theonion.com/articles/hello-do-you-have-a-moment-to-tell-me-about-jesus,35264/>

 <http://www.theonion.com/>
America's Finest News Source

Ed note: This is the last place I would look for a testimony, maybe it shouldn't be.

“A Heart Change”

March 11, 2014

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:8-10

Mr. Mick Onnen is the previous president of Lutheran Hour Ministries. During his presidency, and afterwards, he has written weekly devotions and fielded prayer requests for the leadership of LHM. With his permission, and only the most minor of changes, his sensitive and insightful devotion is shared with you. -- Pastor Klaus

Our son and his family visited over the weekend.

Three-year-old Avery was pretending he was Peter Pan, and of course, he assigned character names to the rest of us. His mom was Wendy; Grandma Nila was Tinker Bell and, of course, Grandpa Mick was ... Captain Hook. (Usually his dad gets to be Captain Hook, but he wanted to include me in his game.)

So, as the characters unfold in Avery's story, Grandma Nila asked Avery, "So, is Captain Hook good or is he bad?"

Avery was quick to say, "Oh, Captain Hook is bad!"

"Well, tell me what makes Captain Hook so bad?" asked Grandma Nila.

In his matter-of-fact and child-like honesty, Avery said, "Well, God hasn't changed his heart yet."

God hasn't changed his heart yet!

What a profound theological statement from a three-year old. You know, we spend hours talking, training and practicing our witnessing skills to say just the right things to introduce people to Jesus. We sometimes feel like failures when we've worked hard to convert a friend or acquaintance who needs to receive His Savior.

What we sometimes forget is that all our efforts don't change hearts. We can tell the story, but only the Holy Spirit can change hearts. St. Paul tells us that in 1 Corinthians 2:14 -- "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Further on in that book Paul emphasizes our dependence upon the Holy Spirit when he says, "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3b).

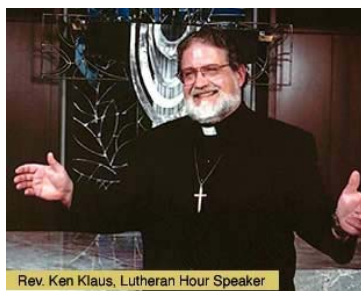
So, as God's witnesses, we continue to share the Gospel with those God places on our daily path. At the same time we remember it is the Spirit who works faith in the hearts of the people, not us. We are simply blessed to be God's instruments.

THE PRAYER: Lord, we pray that You would empower us to speak boldly about our Savior and the salvation which he has won for us on Calvary's Cross. May we always be willing servants and never troublesome obstructions to the sharing of the Gospel. This we ask in our Savior's Name. Amen.

In Christ I remain His servant and yours,



Pastor Ken Klaus
Speaker Emeritus of [The Lutheran Hour](#)®
Lutheran Hour Ministries



Rev. Ken Klaus, Lutheran Hour Speaker

The Disciples Who Didn't Get It...

“You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand....” **JESUS**

One of the most perplexing things about the Easter story is that Jesus' own disciples just didn't *get* it.

All the way up to (and even beyond) Jesus' resurrection, his disciples—who had traveled, studied, and ministered under Jesus for most of his public ministry—seem remarkably confused about what's happening.

During the events of Easter week, we see many examples of the disciples failing to comprehend what Jesus was plainly telling them. For example, note the disciples' reaction to Jesus' direct statement that Judas would betray him:

After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.”

His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.”

Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”

Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

So Jesus told him, “What you are about to do, do quickly.” **But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.** Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. — [John 13:21-29](#) (emphasis mine)

This is a typical scene; the disciples fail to believe or understand what they are plainly told about the events of Easter week. Even after the resurrection, Jesus' disciples were unclear about what had happened until Jesus explained it to them. Despite the miracles they had seen Jesus perform, they refused to

believe Jesus had returned until Jesus repeatedly demonstrated that he was not a “ghost.”

Why did the disciples struggle to believe and understand? Had Jesus failed to warn them in advance about what was going to happen to him?

Actually, Jesus had been predicting his death and resurrection for some time before the actual events of Easter week. Sometimes he spoke in deliberately vague terms; it's perhaps understandable in these cases that the disciples wouldn't have picked up on Jesus' meaning without help. For example, Jesus predicted his death and resurrection early in the gospel of John using a metaphor:

The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” —

[John 2:18-19](#)

However, in other places such as in Matthew 16:21 and Matthew 20:17-19, Jesus speaks plainly and directly about his imminent arrest, death, and resurrection.

If they had been so specifically forewarned—and especially if they knew in advance that Jesus would rise from the dead—why were the disciples so confused and frightened during the drama of Easter week?

Ultimately, we don't know the answer. Surely, much of their confusion was simply the result of their being, well, *human*—like everyone else, they were prone to forget-prone to forgetfulness and misunderstanding. Consider that Jesus' teachings profoundly challenged the religious assumptions they had grown up with. Because Jesus taught both in plain speech and in parables, the disciples might have had trouble understanding when he was speaking literally and when metaphorically. Perhaps, even though

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The Disciples Who Didn't Get It...

“You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand....” JESUS

(Continued from page 15)

they'd seen him work many life-giving miracles, the disciples couldn't bring themselves to believe Jesus' most dramatic claim—that he would die and rise from the grave. And the events of Easter week were stressful, to say the least.

Some Scripture passages also hint at other possibilities. When Jesus made predictions about his death and resurrection, he wasn't doing so just to warn the disciples in advance. Consider these passages:

Jesus replied, “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.... I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am.” — [John 13:7,19](#)

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. — [John 2:22](#)

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. — [Luke 24:25-27](#)

Like many prophecies throughout Scripture, Jesus' predictions weren't always understood and believed by those who first heard them.

Today, we tend to think of predictions purely as “advance warning” about coming events. But the passages above specifically note that understanding often comes *after* the prophesied events have come to pass. The predictions were made so that when the disciples finally got around to remembering Jesus' words, they'd see in them further confirmation that Jesus was who he claimed to be.

It's tempting to scoff at the disciples for their weak faith and ignorance. But to do so is to miss the point: *we're no different*. Like the disciples, we don't always understand what God is doing in our lives. We read God's clear promises in the Bible, yet often succumb to stress and doubt when life gets tough. Sometimes it isn't until *after* God has brought us through a trial that we are able to look back at Scripture and understand that He was with us from the beginning.

God loves us, as He loved the disciples; He wants to bring us into understanding and belief. He wants us to look back at events in our lives, then

The disciples encounter the empty tomb of Jesus Christ, as depicted by William Hole, 1908



examine Scripture to see His words and promises confirmed. And while we sometimes want to roll our eyes at them, we can be grateful to Jesus' hapless disciples for providing us an object lesson in human ignorance... and divine patience.~

source: Bible Gateway Blog, APRIL 3, 2012
POSTED BY ANDY, BIBLEGATEWAY.COM

WONDERFUL THINGS: Christianity is not morality

By James Calderazzo

Published: Friday, February 14, 2014 at 12:05 PM.

The Destin Log



theDESTINlog

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I admit that this is a very dangerous title for a newspaper column from a pastor, so please read on and see if the meaning does not become clearer.

Almost everyone, when they first hear of the Ten Commandments, thinks "this is a list of the things that God requires of me in order to be accepted and approved by Him." I'm afraid that we in the church sometimes propagate this same idea. We want to get the Ten Commandments out in our courthouses and schools, because we want people to know what God requires of them, and we imply that if our nation will keep the Commandments God will set His love on us and bless us. Even though the Ten Commandments are sacred, this un-

derstanding is wrong, and it was wrong 3,400 years ago when God gave Israel these commands. God did not say to Israel, "Here is my law. Obey my commands and I will redeem you and bring you to myself and bless you."

Read the beginning of the Commandments (the prologue): It is Exodus 20:2 *"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other God's before me."* Do you hear? "I am the Lord who has rescued you from bondage. I have set my love and salvation upon you," and then God begins to talk about the Law. It is not that we obey the Law first and then when we measure up and have done enough, God loves us. Instead the order is that first He loves us and redeems us. Then, after He has set His love on us in Jesus, and we begin a relationship with him, in the context of that loving relationship, He gives us His Law.

There are two ways that you can approach the law of God. You can look at it and go, "This is what God requires of me. If I will obey His commands then God will bless me and love me and be for me." Or we come to law and we say, "Because I am received in Jesus, because he has pardoned me out of his sheer grace rather than anything I have ever done or can do, because he has forgiven my sins through Jesus Christ's death on the cross, now I want to know Him better and please Him by following His commands with the strength He provides, and daily

walk in and experience His love."

These two approaches are actually two different religions. One is Christianity and the other is Morality. Christianity (the Gospel) says "I cannot keep the law. I am a lawbreaker. There is no hope for me if I must keep the law to be saved. The law is not my way of salvation. Jesus is the only way. He has kept the Law for me. He loves me and cares for me, and has paid the penalty for my law-breaking. It is not my doing, but God's grace in Jesus that saves me."

Morality says, "I must be good enough. This is what matters. God wants me to be good. God loves successful folks and not failures. So I will be righteous and keep the law and God will care for me and love me and bless me."

If you go the way of Morality then one of two things will happen: you will end up defeated and despondent, or you will end up superior and self-righteous. You are defeated because you try to keep God's law, and again and again you fail. You do not measure up. It is like a burden that you cannot bear. And you will grow weary and begin to despise a God who demands so much from you. And you will despise yourself because you can't do it. And you will despise prayer and the Bible and church because you never feel you have done enough.

Or you will think that you have become a pretty good law-keeper (like the Pharisees of the New Testament). You will feel good about how good you are. And you will look down on those who struggle; and you will tell God how lucky He is to have a servant like you. And notice, there is really no need for Jesus. You do not really need a Savior if you are a good person.

Christianity says, "God has set His love on you in Jesus and has freed you from the bondage of your sins. You are His child now and forever. Here is the way to know His love and to walk in His love and grow closer to the One who has called you to Himself." The order must be correct.

James Calderazzo is pastor of Safe Harbor Presbyterian Church in Destin. He can be reached at safeharborpca@gmail.com.

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Christianity at War

By Galen Dalrymple

War has been declared on Christianity. While I am tempted to say that no one can say with precision when this war started, that would not be true. It started when the Founder of our faith was born. The ruler of the tiny country where Jesus was born,



King Herod, tried to kill him then and individuals and governments have been trying ever since to kill Him and His church. The war has waxed and waned throughout the ages but it has never gone away and it shall not disappear from the face of the earth as long as the present creation stands.

That being said, we are living in a time of perhaps unprecedented warfare against Christianity of all stripes and colors – at least against those who hold to an orthodox faith. There were more martyrs in the 20th century than in the 19 centuries prior and the rate is increasing. Martyrdom is just the tip of the sword – the deadliest part to be sure – but not the only evidence of this war in which we are engaged.

In the United States, religious liberties are being stripped away at a frightening pace, aided and abetted by the government, courts and specific laws such as the Affordable Care Act, wherein Christians are

being told that they must do things which violate their religious beliefs, such as provide insurance that pays for abortifacients. It isn't just Catholics who are taking a beating for their stand in this war, but non-Catholics as well: witness Hobby Lobby. The media scream at the craziness of Christians, impugning rationality and ascribing motivations that are hateful and vicious.

Before I continue, let me be clear about something: I am a Protestant. I have never been Catholic nor do I ever expect to be Catholic. But in this war against Christianity, the Catholic Church is not the enemy. Satan is the enemy. Whether we are Catholic or

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Christianity at War

By Galen Dalrymple

(Continued from page 18)

Protestant, if we are believers in and followers of Jesus, we are Christians. Enough with the names and branding – those things only divide us. It is time for all who bear the banner of Christ to rise together as simply “Christians” because the war is upon us.

There has been an explosion of comment in the blogosphere about a recent opinion piece article at US News and World Report written by one Jamie Steihm, titled “[The Catholic Supreme Court’s War on Women](#)” which was prompted by Supreme Court Justice Sonya Sotomayor’s stay order which allows an international religious order who serve the indigent; “The Little Sisters of the Poor”, to avoid paying fines (temporarily) for not acting in compliance with the HHS mandate requiring them to provide insurance for employees to have free contraception, abortifacients and sterilizations. The opinion piece is laced with vitriol and name-calling, aimed at the Catholic Supreme Court Justice and the Catholic Church. Numerous Catholic bloggers have written in response. What troubles me is that I see so few Protestant bloggers or leaders standing up vocally in defense of believers in the Catholic Church who have taken a brave and courageous stand and who have been treated so blatantly to anti-Catholic bigotry.

In one blog, Rebecca Hamilton, an 18-year member of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, diagnosed the war succinctly when she wrote: “Despite the fact that the faith in this particular frying pan was Catholic, the same treatment extends to every traditional Christian. Make no mistake about it my brothers and sisters in Christ; it was about all of us.” – Rebecca Hamilton, Public Catholic blog, 1/8/14 (<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/publiccatholic/2014/01/deacon-greg-is-beautiful-when-hes-angry/>)

Where are the Protestant voices standing up in one accord with our Catholic brothers and sisters in crying out against the war against Christianity? If Ms. Steihm had written with this amount of poison against Islam or Judaism, there would be a huge outcry. Proverbs warned us: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest — ¹¹ and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man. (Proverbs 6:10-11) While we aren’t talking about poverty or scarcity, the same holds true of freedom and truth: if we sleep, we will lose any claim to it. While we have been sleeping in our own segregated, denominational strongholds, the enemy has been awake and sharpening his arrows and swords and uses people such as Jamie Steihm, unwittingly, to do his bidding.

I am also troubled by how we sometimes respond (when and if we do) to such instances. The enemy issues proclamations (including ones that would require Steihm to have read Ms. Sotomayor’s mind so she could expound on her motivations), resorts to name-calling and at-

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Christianity at War

By Galen Dalrymple

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tacks our integrity. In her view, it couldn't possibly be true that we really do hold our convictions based on a faith principle, not some repressed desire to "keep women down", much less, as in Justice Sotomayor's stay; constitutional principles. But far too often, because we feel attacked, we respond in like manner, even in some of the rebuttals decrying how the enemy has belittled us.

Again, Rebecca Hamilton shows us wisdom: "The bottom line for those of us out here in the audience is this: If you are a Christian, you need to stand up for Jesus. Don't be a jerk about it. By that I mean keep your language clean, don't name-call or attack any person. Do not try to use Satan's weapons to fight Satan...Just stand up strong for Jesus Christ and the right of Christians to be Christian without being attacked, reviled, slandered or bullied in our society. Make your case as the son or daughter of the living God."(op. cit.)

Certainly we have stronger weapons at our disposal than those the enemy uses; demeaning words, name calling and bullying. We have truth, faith, prayer, justice, integrity...and if and when we use those weapons rightly, the enemy doesn't stand a chance.

A long time ago Benjamin Franklin said that we must hang together or we will hang separately. That will happen in our country unless we, believers in Christ, begin to stand together. Let us stand together with grace that comes from knowing the Lord Jesus and His grace to us. Let us stand together with those who may disagree on some things regarding doctrine and polity, but who nonetheless stand with us on the Person of Christ. If we fail to do so, there will be many of us hanging alone.



Galen Dalrymple

Field Curriculum Coordinator at Medical Ambassadors International

Manteca, California (Stockton, California Area)
Nonprofit Organization Management



Lenten Message

from Bishop Nancy Drew

LENTEN MESSAGE

40 or so days ago, we were at the beginning of Lent. On Ash Wednesday, we wore ashes and heard the words, "You are dust and to dust you will return." And this is true but there is also another truth made clear by Christ.

Jesus teaches by example, by doing what the Father is doing and saying what the Father is saying.

Jesus, by his own example taught us that when we pray we are ...to call God, Father. When we do we draw close to Him as children with humble reverence to a father, but we also with holy boldness come to Him as His children. And so, there is two, humble reverence and holy boldness in coming to our Father in prayer.

Jesus lifted his eyes to heaven before calling Lazarus out of the tomb and thanked His Father for hearing him. Jesus wanted the people watching and listening to be convinced that He was God's Son sent into the world by His Father. The Son of God could have silently exerted His power and will with the unseen work of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His purpose but He chose instead to loudly make known the will of the Father, "Lazarus come forth!" It is the will of our Father that all come out of the grave of the world and of sin and be made alive in Him.

The grave of sin and this world, is no place for those whom Christ has made alive. Lazarus was thoroughly revived to life and to health. We as unbeliever's cannot call ourselves out of our graves. We have to use the means of grace provided by Christ. As believers we are not able to sanctify ourselves, but we are to lay aside "every weight and hindrance." God alone makes us holy.

Many people did believe that day in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God but some did not. Some ran, even after and even because of what they saw Jesus do in Lazarus' life, to the Pharisee's to stir up harm against Him and to plot to kill Him. He was going to be killed for doing good. It is a hard thing and an odd thing that some hearts are softened by the miracle of Christ's grace and love to us while other hearts are hardened even more but it is good to remember this. Jesus knew it to be true but He came and He offered just the same. We cannot convert our relatives and friends, God's grace does that but we must make opportunity. We must make known. We must give voice to the will of our Father. (reference John 11:46-47, John 18:14)

Transforming the Middle East and North Africa through HOPE in Jesus Christ!



Dr. John and Barbara Haase of the EPC GCEPC/LEPC have just returned safely from Turkey. They work with SAT-7 to help fund and staff the important work of bringing the Gospel to the Middle East and North Africa. SAT-7 is a Christian satellite TV broadcaster in the Middle East and North Africa. They recently attended the Network Conference where people from 25 countries gathered to focus on the the seemingly hopeless situation in the Middle East and North Africa. Despite apparently desperate circumstances, the Arabic, Farsi, and Turkish language channels of SAT-7 are reaching 15 million viewers across the Middle East and North Africa.

The Haase's use their energies and expertise to assist in making the Gospel available to all in the Middle East and North Africa, and especially to children, women, people who are unable to read or write, and people living in homes which have been traditionally 'closed' to the message of the Gospel; and encouraging the church in the Middle East and North Africa in its life, work and witness for Christ. SAT-7, like the LEPC, requires its ministers to be self supporting as they work to minister the gospel. They routinely travel across America and abroad to spread the gospel. Please keep them in your prayers.

What are the challenges of presenting the Gospel in the Middle East and North Africa?

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is a region best known for conflict and instability. where Christians are few and missionaries unwelcome. In the least-Christian region of the world, believers are persecuted and have little support. For more than 16 years, SAT-7's satellite television broadcasts have bypassed the censorship of rulers, religions, and regimes, bringing quality Christian programming directly to individuals in millions of homes throughout the Middle East and North Africa.



Only about 11% of people in the MENA region have internet access—but over half have satellite TV, their primary means of uncensored information and entertainment. In Iraq, 90% have satellite TV! SAT7 cannot be censored or blocked by rulers and governments without affecting other programming. SAT7 is a bridge to isolated Christians

Sat7 broadcasts 24-7, on five channels, in three languages – Arabic, Farsi (Persian) and Turkish. Programs include talk shows on everyday issues and on questions of faith, where the Christian faith is explained. There are also religious services, plus magazine programmes and game shows. Especially popular, Sat7 reports, are documentaries, or "dramas," which retell biblical stories, fitting nicely with the long tradition of storytelling in the Middle East.



SAT7 is a bridge to isolated Christians



The most popular channel is SAT7 Kids. Independent surveys find that one-in-three children in Iraq and one-in-four in Saudi Arabia watch "Kids." A confirmed audience of over 10 million kids watch SAT7 Kids, and if they are watching, you know their families are watching too!!

Transforming the Middle East and North Africa through HOPE in Jesus Christ!

SAT-7 broadcasts Jesus' message of love, forgiveness, and hope to a confirmed audience of more than 17 million regular viewers in the privacy of their homes. Cost effective and a great return on investment: \$1 provides one Middle East/North Africa viewer 1 full year 24/7 of Christian satellite television!



What viewers have to say (names cannot be used in this region):

"Your programmes provide such a wonderful opportunity for me to explain to my children what we believe as Christians in ways they understand. It really is a precious thing to have this channel." A mother in Turkey

"I came to know Christ through your programmes. I tried to talk about Jesus to my family but they didn't want to listen to me. So I turn the TV on during your programmes and, without saying a word, allow your programmes to talk to my family about Jesus Christ. And now they sit and watch the programmes!" An Iranian woman from Tabriz

"Five years ago I started seeking for the truth in different religions. I was lost, confused and wanted to reach out to God. I really needed comfort and peace. Thank God I found peace and the truth through the programmes and the songs on my favorite channel SAT-7." A woman from Saudi Arabia

What makes SAT-7 a good tool for ministering the gospel?

- *It is accessible: over 50% of homes in the Middle East-North Africa (MENA) have a satellite dish.
- *It is affordable: satellite dishes are easily available to even the poorest people of the region; all SAT-7's programs are free to viewers, with no advertising or fundraising calls (the ministry is 100% supported by donations).
- *It cannot be censored: unlike the internet and smart-phones, satellite cannot be censored or legally blocked.
- *It is inclusive: accessible to all regardless of gender, age, religion, literacy, location.
- *It is indigenous: programs are made by MENA Christians for MENA Christians, ensuring the ministry is culturally relevant and empowering, giving the Christian community a public voice. SAT-7 is not American TV translated and re-packaged.

www.sat7usa.org Rev. Dr. John Haase can be reached at jhaase12@yahoo.com or by contacting generalconference@lutheranepc.com.



Conference theme:
Launch Out into the Deep!



Pastor Ed Burns NJ
Fresh Ponds Chapel



Dr. Thom Peavy (GA)



Bishop Linda Dabney (AR)
Morning Service
Holy Spirit Lutheran



Pastor Cathy Graham(TX)
Church planting
Salt & Light Community



Bishop Dr. David Church(CA)
Director of Missions



Dr. John Haase
Middle East/North Africa



Chaplain Rev. Bill Sirginson (NC)
Emergency Chaplaincy



Guest Speaker Rabbi B.J. Harris
Judaic roots and worship



Ordination and Communion Service
Presiding Bishop Nancy Drew,
Primary Consecrator
Bishop Dr. David Church (CA),
Bishop Michael Norton (SC),
Bishop Linda Dabney (AR) assisting.

Ordination of
Rev. William Sirginson, (NC)



Ordination
Rev. Gladysrose Rusch, (NJ)





The Conference was held at the Clarion Conference Center with shared meals and time between sessions to fellowship and visit



Good News!



GREENVILLE, N.C. -Pitt County welcomes 20 chaplains to the Pitt County Sheriff's Office Chaplain's Program.

After seven months of classroom and field training, 20 chaplains from across Pitt County graduated from the first chaplain course at the sheriff's office on Saturday.

The program is volunteer-based that provides a ministry of guidance and counseling to the employees and volunteers of the sheriff's office.

Chaplains will provide our law enforcement families a trusted source of confidence and encouragement day in and day out, in good times and in bad.

Chaplains also assist the sheriff's office in notifying individuals who have lost a family member in an unexpected manner.

Sheriff Neil Elks delivered the keynote, thanking the chaplain's for their dedication to this program and their willingness to service.

More than 100 friends, family, and supporters gathered to witness the presentation of the certificates.

Rev. W.D. Sirginson, L.E.P.C.



Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Mountain Home, AR enjoys special music Wednesday evening, March 19th. Pictured are soloist, John Tuset and organist, Patsy Ellsworth, along with Pastor Linda Dabney.

The “Back Page” Let Me Hear a Witness!

A recent Barna study says going to church is not that important for growing faith. March 25, 2014 — What, if anything, helps Americans grow in their faith? When Barna Group asked, people offered a variety of answers —prayer, family or friends, reading the Bible, having children—but church did not even crack the top-10 list.

Although church involvement was once a cornerstone of American life, U.S. adults today are evenly divided on the importance of attending church. While half (49%) say it is "somewhat" or "very" important, the other 51% say it is "not too" or "not at all" important. The divide between the religiously active and those resistant to churchgoing impacts American culture, morality, politics and religion.

Why the huge decline? Millennials who are opting out of church cite three factors with equal weight in their decision: 35% cite the church's irrelevance, hypocrisy, and the moral failures of its leaders as reasons to check out of church altogether. In addition, two out of 10 unchurched Millennials say they feel God is missing in church, and one out of 10 senses that legitimate doubt is

prohibited, starting at the front door. In another recent survey more than 4,000 people were asked what first had brought them to church:
 * 2-3 percent of them said they just walked in, and another 2-3 percent said they came because of the programs.
 * 5-6 percent were attracted by the preacher, and
 * 1-2 percent came out of a special need they had, and a similar figure said they had been

reached by an evangelism program.
 * 4-5 percent came because of a Sunday school class, while less than
 * 1 percent was touched by a public evangelistic crusade.
 * Somewhere around 75-90 percent had been brought to the church through the influence of friends and relatives who had gone out into the battlefield and brought

back those who had been wounded. Witnessing is what we do. It's what I'm doing right now. It's what you do when you forward this magazine to someone else.

It is what Donald Sprigg is asking for in commentary in the Onion in February of this year (see page 11).

They are not coming because we are not asking.

Our job is to tell the story, let's get busy.

Peace & Love



Steve & Teddy 9/28/1951

Pastor Steve



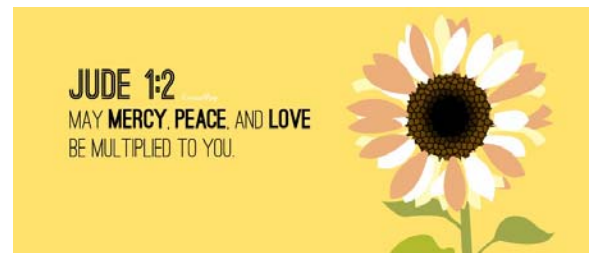
From the Editor

Thanks for all of your contributions. Remember, for this magazine to be a success you must be the reporters and the photographers. I will try and put it together in the best light and we will all praise God in the process.

May the blessings of Christ be with you all. ED.



Is he done yet?



Evangelical Protestant Church(GCEPC)®,
 Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church(LEPC)®

