

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

BREAKING
NEWS!

HE IS RISEN!

HE IS RISEN IN-
DEED!

FILM AT
ELEVEN, ED!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Who We Are	2
Bishop's Desk	3
What is Consent?	5
A Faith to Live With	10
Empathy More Than Words	14
When Did Christian- ity Become Evil In This Country?	17
Reaching out. Reach- ing deeper. Going Beyond Where We	18
The Cost of Sharing Christ	20
Don't Become Too Sophisticated	24
7 Satanic Strategies to Distract From Christianity	26
Christianity Is Losing in America	28
A New Command- ment	31
A Psalm for Good Friday	35
Welcome	36
"Be Prepared"	37
The Back Page	38

The Evangelical Protestant The Magazine of the Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church

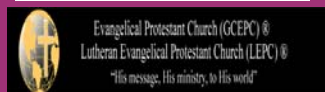
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Mark 15:42-46 It was Friday evening, before the day of worship, (43) when Joseph arrived. He was from the city of Arimathea and was an important member of the Jewish council. He, too, was waiting for the kingdom of God. Joseph boldly went to Pilate's quarters to ask for the body of Jesus. (44) Pilate wondered if Jesus had already died. So he summoned the officer to ask him if Jesus was, in fact, dead. (45) When the officer had assured him that Jesus was dead, Pilate let Joseph have the corpse. (46) Joseph had purchased some linen cloth. He took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in the cloth. Then he laid the body in a tomb, which had been cut out of rock, and he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.



Springtime in the desert, Arizona



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 Desk



Greeting Everyone,
 God's peace and grace to you!
 We are looking forward to
 Easter. We are in the midst of

God desires his people the called out ones, the church, to recover the lost art of hearing God

Lent. Spring is coming. It won't be much longer before all of the cold days pass away and warm days arrive. In spite of all that goes on in the world seasons continue to come and go and the day rises and evening comes at night fall. God ordained it that way. In fact in his word God says he was pleased with this occurring. When God sets things in motion they stay that way unless he intervenes so from the time when he separated dark and light and hung the sun and the moon and stars they have stayed as he placed them and they have done the job that he assigned to them. In doing what they have been assigned to do they proclaim God's glory. They fulfill their purpose. Unlike man, who is the very top of God's creation they do not have a mind of their own.

God gave man a mind of his own, free will, and that is part of God's glory revealed through man that man is able to think for himself, decide for himself and carry on in daily life. However, God still has control because everything that exist is held together by Christ. Even though man has free will if Jesus decided of his free will to let go of us we would cease to be. When we come to understand this concept, we come to understand the greatness of God, the power of God and of our part in revealing his glory. We are reliant on his mercy and grace.

Part of our growing in God is our coming into the knowledge of who God is and learning to enjoy a real relationship with Him. One of my greatest joys is to be able to walk daily with Christ in such a way that I am able to communicate with him



in a two way conversation. He has called me his sheep just as he has called all of us who believe him and receive him as our sacrifice his sheep. As his sheep I and all who believe and receive him can hear his voice. Much of the church for some reason at some point decided that God was not talking any more which makes absolutely no sense since so much of his word is about him speaking to us. Some say that we have his written word and that is all but that is not what his word teaches. His word teaches that he desires a relationship with us and to be able to relate we must be able to communicate. Communication is what makes a relationship dynamic and keeps it alive. Relationships that do not have communication may not last long, stagnant and certainly no depth can be

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.

(Continued on page 4)

Bishop's Desk



(Continued from page 3)

created. One of the advantages that we get when we are born again is that we get to have a communicating relationship with the God of the Universes. That is really amazing when we think about it!

Why does someone like God want a relationship with people like us? I don't really know but I am glad he does. I encourage you to seek out the hearing for God's voice for yourself if this is not already a part of your relationship with Jesus. It will change your life and your walk with him. It will help you grow and mature. It will cause you to

have the mind of Christ as his word says, receive direction, become stronger in your faith and so many benefits and as his word says, we are not to forget his benefits. I have been keeping journals for more than 25 years, writing things that the Lord teaches me, thoughts that he has shared with me, ways he has opened his scriptures to me, prayers he has had me pray and that he has answered, things that he has told me were to come and did and more. Christ desires to reveal his glory through us. He wants to share his understanding with us. One of the basics for Jesus was to do what he saw the Father doing and what he heard the Father saying. Jesus said he did nothing of himself. He set our example. He wants the same for us. Jesus exercised his free will to decide that he wanted his will to be whatever God's will was so that

God would receive glory. That's what he wants for us too. God desires his people the called out ones, the church, to recover the lost art of hearing God.

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.

In this holy season I pray that you will come into a newness of depth in your relationship with Christ Jesus by the work of the Holy Spirit who will teach you and by the hearing of the voice of the one who loves you more than anyone else.

Blessings and I hope you enjoy this issue of our EP Magazine.

Bishop Nancy Drew



What is Consent?

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.

Working at the University of South Carolina I am involved with our sexual assault prevention department that focuses on educating young men and women about the topic of consent. This is not just a college issue but a worldwide issue that is beginning to get more attention from the media, politicians and the community in general. April is Sexual Assault Awareness month so I wanted to address this topic as it is crucial to the healing and wholeness of many victims who question themselves and what happened to them.

I believe it is important as ministers that we are very clear on the topic of sexual consent. We believe and preach the truth of God's word; that fornication is a sin and sexual intercourse should be saved for marriage. Purity is the safest and best choice from the Father for wholeness individually and in marriage. We could devote a whole article on the topic of purity, but that is not the purpose of this article and this article is in no way meant to endorse sexual activity outside of marriage. Many have been wounded because their No was not acknowledged nor respected. They did not ask to be raped or assaulted. And, many bystander's judge and victim blame because they do not understand the definition of consent.

The reality is we serve a fallen world and as ministers we are going to be faced with victims seeking help who have been sexually assaulted or raped or may have been the perpetrator of such a crime. They will need understanding about consent and this will become one focus of the process of their healing and legal proceedings if they choose to file charges. If you are not clear on this topic and have been put in a position to counsel a victim I hope the information in this article will be a beginning to gaining more understanding.

First let's be clear on the definitions.

Rape is forced sexual intercourse including both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means penetration by the offender(s). Includes attempted rapes, male as well as female victims. Attempted rape includes verbal threats of rape.*

Sexual assault is a wide range of victimizations, separate from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include attacks or attempted attacks generally involving unwanted sexual contact between victim and offender. Sexual assaults may or may not involve force and include such things as grabbing or fondling. It also includes verbal threats.*

*Bureau of Justice Statistics

(Continued on page 6)

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Some important statistics to know:

APRIL IS SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH
 HOW DO WE TALK ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE? HOW DO WE TAKE ACTION AGAINST IT?
 Arm yourself with the truth and tips to start leading the way in sexual assault prevention.

THE FACTS: SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE U.S.
 Every day in the U.S., over **500 women** are sexually assaulted.
 Your number doesn't even account for all the sexual assaults that go unreported.

1 in 3 teens suffer physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.
1 in 5 women are sexually assaulted while in college.

For every 100 cases of rape, there are only...
12 ARRESTS
9 PROSECUTIONS
5 FELONY CONVICTIONS

THE POWER OF EARLY EDUCATION
 Teaching safety and respect as part of early education is critical to preventing sexual violence.

Why is this important?
 At-risk children without adequate early education are **70%** more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.
 Children without healthy attachments in relationships with those responsible for their care can have difficulty with emotional and social development later on.

3 Things to Teach Our Kids About Safety and Consent

- Always ask before touching, and heed the answer.
- Value the importance and truth in the words "stop" and "no," whether they're saying it or hearing it.
- Recognize the emotions tied to facial expressions and body language — someone can mean "no" without ever saying it.

You can and should discuss your body, your health and your feelings as much as you want.
 Learn how to help others who seem to be in trouble.

YOU CAN HELP PREVENT SEXUAL ASSAULT!

- Share your power: you have stronger influence over your friends and peers than you may think. How can you use your skills to be a leader?
- Consider the negative messages you hear about sex and violence online, on TV and in movies, and in the media. How have they shaped your own ideas?
- Identify friends you can connect with to build an alliance network.
- Seek out resources from organizations like the YWCA. We're here to help!
- Practice starting the conversation — how would you bring up the topic of healthy sexuality to others?

YOU HAVE THE POWER TO INFLUENCE YOUR COMMUNITY. WE CAN CHANGE OUR CULTURE AND PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE. YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY AND FOR THE FUTURE!
 800.435.0000 | 703.620.3000 | 703.620.3000

• Every 2 minutes, someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted. It is impossible to know how many are raped a day because 60% of crimes go unreported. (RAINN.org).

• Every year in the United States, 1,270,000 women experience rape (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, & Merrick, 2011).

• About 3% of American men - a total of 2.78 million men - have experienced a rape at some point in their lifetime.

• One in four college women report surviving rape or attempted rape at some point in their lifetime. (Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006).

• 25% of women and 16% of men have been sexually abused as children (Dube, Withfield, & Felitti, 2005).

• Of those women who enter the Navy, 39% are rape survivors prior to their service.

• Of those men who enter the Navy, 13% are perpetrators prior to their service.

• 28% of women in the military experienced rape during their military service (Sadler, Booth, & Doebbeling, 2005).

• Of those women raped in the military, 96% of the perpetrators are U.S. military men (Sadler, Booth, & Doebbeling, 2005).

• Approximately 1 in 5 Black (22.0%) and White non-Hispanic (19%) women, and 1 in 7 Hispanic women (15%) in the United States have

50% More than 50% of all rape/sexual assault incidents were reported by victims to have occurred within one mile of their home or at their home.

Where?

- 4 in 10** take place at the victim's home
- 2 in 10** take place at the home of a friend, neighbor, or relative
- 1 in 12** take place in a parking garage

When?

- 43%** of rapes occur between 6pm and midnight
- 24%** of rapes occur between midnight and 6am
- 33%** of rapes occur between 6am and 6pm

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(Continued from page 6)

experienced rape at some point in their lives. (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, & Merrick, 2011).

- More than one-quarter of women (27%) who identified as American Indian or as Alaska Native and 1 in 3 women (34%) who identified as multiracial non-Hispanic have experienced rape in their lifetime. (Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, & Merrick, 2011).

“What is Consent?”

- Consent to have sex is when *both* people **agree to have sex**. But it's not just allowing something, or giving permission - it's knowing that they *both* really want and desire each other.
- Consent should be *mutually* agreed upon: with a **clear understanding** of what is being asked for and consented to. Ask first.
- Touching someone's breasts, genitals or buttocks without their consent is **sexual assault**. So is making someone touch you. Any form of sexual activity with another person *without* her or his consent is sexual assault.
- Consent should be **freely given**: it should never be coerced, be forced, involve pressure, intimidation or threats.
- Consent must **never be assumed** or implied, even if you're in a relationship. Intimate partner rape, date rape and acquaintance rape are the most common forms of rape.
- It's **always OK to say No**. Consent may be withdrawn at any time, and when it is withdrawn all sexual activity must *stop* immediately.
- If you do not ask for Consent, you are at risk of doing something the other person doesn't want you to do. You are also at risk of **breaking the law** and facing criminal charges.

(Continued on page 8)

What is Consent?

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What is Not Consent?

- **Silence, or not responding** - is *not* consent. *The absence of a No does not mean Yes ...* no answer does *not* mean Consent can be assumed.
- **Lack of physical resistance** does *not* mean Consent can be assumed. Someone *threatened* with violence, or *intimidated psychologically*, may be too *fearful* to resist.
- A Yes is *not* Consent when someone is **coerced, pressured, or afraid** of how their partner might react to a No response: *"I'm not sure if I'm ready" "I don't know if I want to" "I think I've had too much to drink" "I don't want to get AIDS" "I'm scared"* - all of these statements must be taken as meaning No.
- **Confused or unclear communication** is *not* Consent. Sometimes we may think we mean *one thing* when we are *actually saying something else*. i.e. *"Want to go back to my place?"* (consent *only* to go to your place)
- Someone who is **intoxicated from alcohol or drugs**, voluntarily and involuntarily, or who is unconscious or asleep, unaware, or otherwise helpless, is *not* capable of giving Consent. Someone may be responsible for being drunk, or high, but they are *not* responsible for being sexually assaulted.
- Someone who is **under-age** is *legally incapable* of giving Consent. It is the responsibility of the person asking for Consent to be aware of the *legal age of Consent* for their state or country.
- **A sexy dress is not consent.** Someone may *dress or behave* in a sexy or provocative way - but dress or behavior should *not* be confused with Consent. Dress or behavior is not a legal argument for sexual assault." (Adlibstudio, 2011, Consent is Sexy Campaign)

We as ministers will be confronted with rape and sexual assault at some time if not many times during our ministry and should be clear on the definition of consent in order

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(Continued from page 8)

to assist men and women in knowing their rights and when they have been a victim of a crime. Denial and a lack of understanding about Consent lead to unwarranted shame and guilt on behalf of many victims. Please provide them a safe place to come to. If you are unsure about consent or disagree with this I urge you to visit a local sexual trauma center and speak to a local advocate or sexual trauma counselor. The ultimate goal is for healing through salvation, healing and transformation. Knowing the truth and preventing victim blaming is critical to facilitate the process of healing.

Resources

National Sexual Violence Resource Center - <http://m.nsvrc.org/>

Infographics found at <http://www.ywcaww.org/saam-infographic/> and www.rainn.org



A Faith to Live With

Bishop Dr. David A. Church



Bishop Dr.
David A.
Church
Director of

To reach the lost and bring them into the Kingdom of God requires that we return to *God's way* of building the Church, discarding man's methods with those given us by Jesus Christ who said "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is" Heb 11:6

HABBAKUK 2:4 - "Behold the proud, His soul is not upright in him; But the just shall live by his faith."

HEBREWS 10:38 - "Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." ROMANS 1:17- "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

The Evangelical Church today is failing morally and spiritually, with little discernible difference between average "church people" and the unbeliever. Two reasons I see are:

1) We confuse *acknowledging facts about faith* with *living our faith*. We stress past actions instead of the present (cf. Heb 10:38 "Now the just shall live by faith"). We confuse believing facts about God and the Bible with trusting in our God and in the Bible. We point those wallowing in their sin back to their "confession" or "profession" of Christ and tell them all is well. The belief "once saved always saved" distorts the truth about our *eternal security "in Christ."* They reason from John 3:16 which states "whosoever believeth in Him has *everlasting* life." They argue "Doesn't that mean forever, so God can't take it away no matter what we do? It was a gift, after all." To preach this is to tell the possible unbeliever he has an inheritance in Christ's kingdom, or to tell the "carnal Christian" living in sin he is saved since he made a profession of faith when he was a child. Holding up one's hand or walking forward and saying "the sinner's prayer" is not the same as truly believing in Christ as presented in the Gospel preached by Paul. This is especially true because of the psychological pressure and guilt they use to get a confession of "faith." This is manipulation and coercion, forgetting it is the Father that brings us to Christ, and the Holy Spirit is who convicts us of sin. This has become over the past hundred years to be the accepted method of evangelism during crusades. Unfortunately, this is neither Biblical evangelism nor is it the Gospel. Here are several distortions a large percentage of modern evangelicals preach in or-

(Continued on page 11)

A Faith to Live With

Bishop Dr. David A. Church

(Continued from page 10)

der to get people saved instead of preaching the Cross of Christ with the Law and Gospel. We need to remember a person who does not see themselves as lost will see no need for a Savior.

We tell people they must do these things below to be saved:

- **Invite Jesus into your heart and receive Jesus:** *Where in Bible are we told to do this? John 1:10-12 is the verse usually cited, but what does it really say? It says that those that received Him were given the “power to become” children of God, not that “receiving Him” makes them so. The “standing at the door and knocking” motif in Revelation 3 is also used out of context- it portrays Christ desiring entry into the apostate church of Laodicea, desiring fellowship with them again. “The just shall live by faith” by belief in the Gospel, is not stressed or mentioned in this type of “invitation to receive Christ.”*
- **Just repent of your sins:** *Repent of unbelief in Christ, “Repent and believe the Gospel.” Mark 1:15, Acts 2:38 One can repent of sins in general but never get saved. People often make bargains with God they never keep.*
- **Confess your sins:** *Confessing individual sins is different than acknowledging one's status as a sinner. 1Jn 1:9, which is cited as a “proof text,” is written to Christians to restore fellowship. It is not to unbelievers. Context is important, as is genre of the passages used.*
- **Feel sorry for your sins:** *Judas felt very sorry for selling Jesus out, but how did that work out for him? So did Simon Magnus, who tried buying the power to lay hands upon people to receive the Holy Spirit.*
- **Just make Jesus your Lord:** *He is your Lord whether you accept Him as your Lord or not! God already made Him Lord and Christ in Acts 2:36. Philippians 2:10-11” that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those un-*

(Continued on page 12)

A Faith to Live With

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To reach the lost and bring them into the Kingdom of God requires that we return to God's way of building the Church, discarding man's methods with those given us by Jesus Christ who said "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

(Continued from page 11)

der the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...."

• **Pray the sinner's prayer:** We say "just repeat after me..." Where is this prayer seen and used in the Bible? The 3,000 souls at Pentecost were not asked to say "it." What is it exactly? What if it's prayed wrong? Are the words right? Where is the Gospel?

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO PAUL

ICor 15:3-4 "*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,"*

THIS IS THE GOSPEL THAT SAVES WHEN BELIEVED! THIS AND THIS ALONE! GRACE ALONE BY FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE! This is why our "converts" fall away so often. Their conversion is flawed if they have not heard and believed the true Gospel delivered by Paul.

2) The practice of true repentance and holiness is rarely preached from the pulpit or emphasized today because we are afraid of offending people. We go to the altar with a regret or remorse instead which does not bring about a transformed life as Paul mentions in Romans 12:2. We focus on the imputed righteousness of Christ but forget about the personal holiness God requires. Many Evangelicals have forsaken holiness and become conformed to the world. We justify compromise. We confuse righteousness with legalism. We redefine righteous living with doing what is right in our own eyes. We allow lust, just don't smoke cigarettes, or drink or cuss. We fail to live as good neighbors but it's okay since we do not dance or go to the theater. We can live all week for the Devil as long as we go to church on Sunday. We say "I can do what I want because God will forgive me no matter what I do. We live like we have a license to sin with grace, and have no self-discipline. Hebrews 12:14 tells us though "**Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.**" Obvi-

(Continued on page 13)

A Faith to Live With

Bishop Dr. David A. Church

(Continued from page 12)

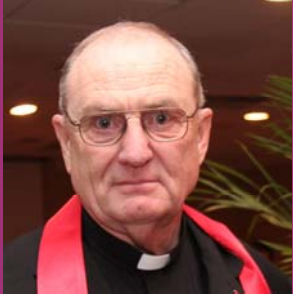
ously no one will be perfect, but it is a warning against those who think they can live and practice sin habitually. But we can live righteously by faith in God's power and strength to keep us from sin. We might find that we need this new faith ourselves! We must pursue holiness. But we need not rely on our own strength of will. Gal 5:16 instructs us to "***Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.***" If we over emphasize faith, we lose the need for personal righteousness. If we over emphasize righteousness, we get caught up in legalism. Just follow God's revealed will and everything falls into place. The balance is found by abiding in Christ and living by faith, a saving faith that depends on God. The armor of God is supplied to us that we may persevere and finish our race.

Eph 6:10-20: ¹⁰ ***Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*** ¹¹ ***Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*** ¹² ***For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, ^[c] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*** ¹³ ***Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.***

¹⁴ ***Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*** ¹⁵ ***and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*** ¹⁶ ***above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.*** ¹⁷ ***And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*** ¹⁸ ***praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints***"

Empathy More Than Words

Rev. Dr. Thomas Peavy Board Certified Crisis Chaplain.



Rev. Dr. Thomas Peavy Board Certified Crisis Chaplain

As I continue my thoughts on Empathy More Than Words, I think of the times when I have found myself struggling with what to say, what or should I do, along with a plethora of other questions. These struggles are not foreign to many who work in the areas of Medicine, Hospice, Counseling, Psychology, Social Work, Emergency Response, Law Enforcement, Chaplaincy, Ministry and those encountering usual life circumstances. One can respond empathically to both negative and positive situation however, most times it is the less than positive stressors in life that are most often recalled as times where one struggles with empathy and how to respond. There are times when spoken words may not be opportune, may need to be processes adequately or kept for future remembering. In addition the moment, many times, is confused and a multitude of activities can confound the situation even more. It may be at those times that empathy becomes more than the spoken word. Those in Chaplains Ministry know of the Ministry of Presence and many times that presence says more than words. Whatever the response one makes, it needs to be thoughtful, heart centered and honest in its content.

In my Hospice Ministry I often find myself offering little other than my presence and a hand to hold that of one who is at life's end. No words surpass the touch of another person who is there only to be with the one who is dying and offer a measure of comfort as appropriate. In these times the focus must be on the person who is in need. Sometimes that is the patient and at other times family, caregivers, friends and providers of medical assistance. All are involved with the event of death and all, in their way, need empathic understanding and response. As we are called to our Ministry we will find ourselves bearing witness to death and other life events of those in our flocks and in the general public.

In Luke 24:13-15 we hear these words to guide us in our response to those mourning: Observe that, when the Savior did come to those morning ones, He acted very wisely toward them. He did not at once begin by saying, "I know why you are sad." N; He waited for them to speak and his patience drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn hence the way of wisdom. Do not talk much yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Those grief's which are silent run very deep and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy has an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties: do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them, and they will be better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often by facing the disease of sorrow the cure is half effected; for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery, and when mystery that mystery is extracted by clear description, the sharpness of the woe

(Continued on page 15)

Empathy More Than Words

Rev. Dr. Thomas Peavy Board Certified Crisis Chaplain.

(Continued from page 14)

is over. Learn, then, ye who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine.

This is the word of the Lord. Praise be to God.

As I think about these words, I recall a time in my life when I was simply led by God to offer what I could as a response. At the time I had no idea of how I would or should respond to the life event that happened to my life long friend and his wife. Having no acquaintance with ministry and running for God at every turn in my life, I was faced with a professional and spiritual dilemma. I was brought face to face with my friend's (more a brother to me) broken life. His wife had gone to pick-up their only child from an overnight stay with a friend. On the way home the car skidded on wet pavement, left the road and hit a tree. The child, Becky, had a closed head and died in the arms of her parents at a hospital. They donated her organs so others might have a chance to live and see and in some way it kept her alive in that respect. The mother had significant facial injury and required weeks of hospital stay for corrective surgery and healing. Each time I visited they had the same unanswerable question to which there was little if any response of comfort. Why? On my drives home I thought and hoped to find a way to respond and nothing came. Since I was distant from God, I did not think of prayer and yet I was constantly seeking a response. I have come to realize that this was one of my first tests and call to ministry for those dealing with loss and death. Even though I did not recognize it, God placed words in my thoughts and used my creativity to craft a response that was helpful and a message from the heart. I wrote a poem to my friend and his wife and left it with them when I concluded a visit. I asked them to read the poem when they had time alone with each other. I said "You have asked me why and this is my best effort to respond." I titled the poem "The Thief." and I now present it for your consideration. Since I am not a poet my efforts are rudimentary but they are words from my heart to my brother and lifelong friend and his wife

The Thief

A thief came suddenly
and took a precious thing
your child's life and the joy it brings.

(Continued on page 16)

Empathy More Than Words

Rev. Dr. Thomas Peavy Board Certified Crisis Chaplain

(Continued from page 15)

The world just stopped
surely she can't be gone
someone so precious the one you have loved so long.

Your heart is broken.
Your tears run warm like a Summer's rain.
Your mind struggles to make sense of this pain.

You have lost a brightness
that cute little smile, the voice, energy and tenderness
of your very special child.

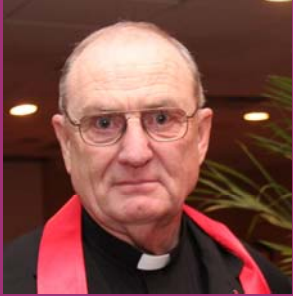
You are saddened. You are enraged
yet your manner is composed.
You hurt so very deeply no one really knows.

I stand and I watch you.
I struggle with my tears.
I recall our lasting friendship over oh so many years.

I struggle with what to say.
I really don't know what to do.
So, I'll just hold you two in my arms and say,
I'll be here for you.

May God richly bless His servants who are called to offer their presence and comfort
to His children. He has spoken to us and we hear His call.

Rev. Thom



Rev. Dr. Thomas
Peavy Board Certified
Crisis Chaplain

When Did Christianity Become evil In This Country?

Ed Mulvaney, Jr.

Attacks on Christianity occur on a regular basis these days. The Washington Times reported that city officials in King, North Carolina, removed a display of a soldier kneeling before a cross, in order to avoid a lawsuit. According to Fox News, the lawsuit was brought on by a veteran backed by the Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Still another recent attack involved a cover story in Newsweek magazine. The article condemned evangelical "cafeteria Christians" who take Bible verses out of context in condemning homosexuals, demanding school prayer, and praying for salvation for our country at football games.

Since when did Christianity become the villain in our culture? It would seem the efforts of secularists and atheists would be better directed at condemning a religion where some of its followers carry out jihad against infidels who will not convert to their belief.

Viewed in terms of the domestic racial unrest and terrorism we see today, vilifying Christianity is ridiculous and shows a lack of understanding on behalf of those who do not know history. After all, it was Christians, the Pilgrims and Puritans, who came to America seeking freedom from religious persecution. Their efforts resulted in a democracy where the individual rights of all citizens -believers and non-believers - would be protected.

It was Christians, like William Wilberforce, who fought in parliament to abolish the British slave trade. In America, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin, which ultimately served as a catalyst to unite Americans against slavery.

And what about the many humanitarian organizations, such as The Salvation Army and Samaritan's Purse, who serve those in need around the world.

Our nation was born in defiance of tyranny....and now a form of tyranny, that attempts to strip away any acknowledgement of our Christian heritage, is emerging.

We as Americans have a great heritage for good, engrained in the principles of our Christian faith. No one has the right to strip away what has been granted under our First Amendment privileges.

We would do well to heed the words of President Franklin D Roosevelt in his 1939 State of the Union address. At that time, the world cautiously watched as Hitler's Nazi Germany was emerging in Europe. President Roosevelt said "Where freedom of religion has been attacked, the attack has come from sources opposed to democracy. There comes a time in the affairs of men when they must prepare to defend, not their homes alone, but the tenets of faith and humanity on which their churches, their governments, and their very civilization are founded. The defense of religion, of democracy, and of good faith among nations is all the same fight. To save one we must now make up our minds to save all".



Guest opinion on
January 28, 2015 at
4:12 PM, updated
January 29, 2015 at
6:43 AM AL.com

Opinion

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Reaching out. Reaching deeper. Going Beyond Where We Are.

Bishop Nancy Drew



Bishop Nancy Drew

Every day of my life I have the need to hear God. After walking with Him these many years, I would not know how to begin the day without Him. If I did not have Him to turn to and know that He was there willing and able to speak to me throughout the day in the multiplicity of things that occur, decisions to be made, things to be shared my life would not be the same. I love the Lord's voice. It is wonderful to hear. Many years ago I began to seek Him to hear Him on a regular basis. There were times in my life and ministry when I KNEW that He was directing action and words to say. I saw lives changed because of it and I knew He was at work but I wanted more, I wanted something for me personally. I wanted to know my God and to love my God and to let everything else come out from that relationship. I am not going to tell my story here but I want you to grow in your own story. I have included below an excerpt from James Goll's book, "The Beginner's Guide to Hearing God." Like James Goll and many others, lay people and ministers alike, I believe that it is essential that the Church, God's children, the called out ones, His representatives in the earth be able to hear God and know that they hear God. The Lord has impressed on us in the EPC GCEPC/LEPC to "go deeper." "Launch out" He has said to us. Let's go deeper and deeper still. We can change the world. Hearing His voice is a learning process but an invaluable gift from God the Father to His children. He draws us close to Himself, wraps Himself around us, shares Himself with us through His word, His presence, His voice. The Church and the individual believers that make up His mystical Body need to hear and recognize His voice in these times. Our Father has things He wants to share with us. Your Father has things He wants to share with you.

Our Need to Hear God

*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.
John 10:27*

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with Me. Revelation 3:20



Does God really speak today? Will He speak personally to me. If I listen, will He speak in such a manner that even I can understand? Thank God, the answer is yes!

And, believe it or not (I expect you will believe it by the time you finish this book) God Himself wants all of us to hear what He is saying—more than any of us do!

Each of us was created with a deep inner longing to hear our Master's voice. He didn't make us to be mechanical robots that just march around doing pre-ordained things. Our Father God created us to have fellowship with Him. It is our birthright to have an actual relationship with our God.

(Continued on page 19)

Reaching out. Reaching deeper. Going Beyond Where We Are. Bishop Nancy Drew

(Continued from page 18)

It is our yearning for an intimate relationship with the lover of our souls is to be fulfilled, hearing His voice is a must. We cannot grow in our relationship with God unless we draw near to Him, trusting that He wants to speak to us personally.

Jesus came to restore humankind into the sweet fellowship that Adam and Eve first had known in the Garden. Sin cut them off from God and they could not be close to God. Sin in the same way today cuts off each of us from God. But sin doesn't have the final word. Because of the cross and the shed blood of Christ Jesus we can be restored to fellowship. One of the main reasons Jesus came was to enable us to walk in restored communion with God.

From my perspective, the greatest need in the Church today is for believers to clearly hear the voice of God for themselves. For us to reach our potential for an intimate relationship with God, we must be able to communicate with Him. Communication with God goes two ways: (1) talking to Him (2) Listening to Him when He talks to us. To have good communication, we must learn how and when to speak up and how to push the "pause button" in order to listen.

Most of us seem to do okay on the first one. But we have to take the time to learn the lost heart of listening to Him, expectantly.

It Takes Two

Fellowship is not a one way road. It takes at least two, with both parties-in one another's presence-sharing attention in some kind of communion....Come with me now on a journey of beginning to hear (and love hearing) God's voice. (End excerpt.) James Golls book "The Beginner's Guide to Hearing God" can be read online at: <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0830746110>

reference:

biblehub.com/job/2-11.htm 3/13/15

charismamag.com/life/women/9582-3-types-of-people-you-don-t-want-to-pray-for-you 3/13/15



Hearing God is a two way communication,
pick up your end.

The Cost of Sharing Christ



The General Conference of Evangelical Protestant Churches which includes the Evangelical Protestant Church and the Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church partners with Gospel for Asia to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ into unreached areas. The dedication and love that the ministers from Gospel for Asia demonstrate in their passion and service for Christ is inspiring. They work hard and are gratified when the people of the villages that they go to can glimpse of Jesus as He really is. This story is about one of the teams that take the gospel into unreached areas through the use of media by showing a film on a stretched out sheet to the villagers who gather around. It is a simple ministry with a strong focus-to reveal Christ Jesus. It takes fortitude and perseverance to continue in the face of opposition but the reward comes when villagers accept Christ. Another team comes in after them for follow up ministry. We are pleased and blessed to participate in this partnership of value with GFA.



The Cost of Sharing Christ

(Continued from page 20)

Flip flops squish the mud as raindrops splatter on the tops of trees and the heads of the four young women. For three months out of every year, it is rainy season in the Himalayas, and the GFA film team ladies trek and climb and slip and slide up and down the mountain range. As the four walk through forests and grassy stretches, leeches cling to their skin. Even though the girls hate leeches, they peel them off and press on.

One of the girls smiles. She's carrying on her back a cone basket full of materials the film team needs—that the people in the next village need.

'It Is Not Easy to Serve God'

Pasha, 23, leads this film team. She's been serving the Lord and her people through film ministry for four years. "Through these years, what I've realized is that it is not easy to serve God," Pasha opens up. Once, after the team traveled hours in the rain, struggling past fallen trees strewn across the mountains, with equipment in tow, the people in the village of Langdairo told them they couldn't show the film—a film the women knew would bring hope to many, if only the villagers would watch it. The people scattered across these mountains have a distinct subculture. They're afraid Christ will strip them of the cultural heritage that makes them who they are, so they reject Him. Still, one kind soul offered the film team a place to stay.

The women settled in the village of Langdairo and began what would be five months of ministry in that region.



The Story That Breaks Barriers

First thing when the girls wake up, they have personal devotions. Then one of them cooks breakfast, squatting near a fire. They sit together and ask God to bring hope to those in desperate need. They travel to a nearby village, where local authorities have already given permission for them to show the film, and tell people about Jesus. In the late afternoon, they pound posts in the dirt and stretch the projector screen across the posts. Night falls and people gather. Then the screen lights up, and for a few potent hours, the villagers' preconceptions about the Christian God fall, and they see Jesus as He is.

(Continued on page 22)

The Cost of Sharing Christ

The story ends and Pasha walks to the front of the crowd. This is why she serves in film ministry.

Joy pulsing through her veins, she shares about her God. She tells the souls, some questioning, some crying, some glad, but all needy, that she and her friends are available to talk and pray.

Except for on freezing winter nights, the team and the crowd will stay for a second film. Near midnight, having talked and prayed and torn down the equipment, Pasha and the ladies return to Langdairo and collapse into bed, hungry but too tired to cook dinner. Many of their days are like this.



Opposition Draws Her Closer to God

As the women continued ministering in Langdairo and praying for an opportunity to share the film there, the Lord answered, and the villagers gave them the chance to screen the film. But when they did show it, no one opened their hearts to the grace of God—not one person did during the entire five months they were living in Langdairo.

Opposition is normal. In one village, a man went around before he team arrived, telling everyone not to listen to the women. He threatened them with a stick but didn't beat them because they were women. Sometime later, they found themselves in the same public transportation as the man. He sat in the front and, pretending not to notice the women, ridiculed them, even saying the villagers needed to chase the team out of the village. Pasha sat silent. The man's words felt like blows to her ears and her heart.

"Being young, when that man humiliated us before people and opposed me, I was so hurt," Pasha tells us honestly. "But when I read God's Word, it says, 'He who rejects you rejects Me.' It encouraged me a lot. When people were against me, it made me closer to God. I faced a lot of opposition, but God was with me always."

When people oppose her, Pasha's burden for them only increases, and God gives her the encouragement she needs to move forward.

The Cost of Sharing Christ

(Continued from page 22)



All for Precious People

After the women left Langdairo, they heard great news. Gospel for Asia pastors had gone to the village to follow up, and two families trusted in Jesus.

“We were filled with joy!” Pasha remembers. “We thought, Our labor is not in vain. . . . We were really thankful to God.”

These sisters, who cook and cry and laugh together, are deeply burdened for their people. They know the cost and they see hope, so tomorrow again they will gladly climb up and down the mountains, peel leeches off their skin and endure persecution so precious people can see Jesus in all His humanity and, someday, know Him in all His glory.



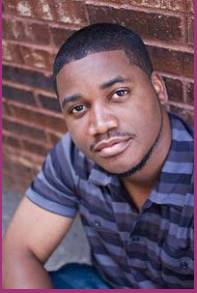
GFA March 2015.

Don't Become Too Sophisticated

Jamaal Williams

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

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Have you ever been under demonic attack or wrestled with Satan?

If the answer is no, you probably aren't intending to lie but you are deceived. As Chip Ingram said in his spiritual classic *The Invisible War*, "Our sophisticated worldview can actually hinder us in the situations we confront. We start thinking that the problem is a spouse, a child, a boss, a policy, illness, or a circumstance." We learn from Paul in Ephesians chapter 6:10-21 that every Christian is in a wrestling match and the problem is not "flesh and blood" but demonic powers!

Pastors, we need to be reminded that our ministry is a big deal to Satan and a lot is at stake. He is just as tuned into your sermons, schedule, fears, failure, and future as your wife is! Only Satan's interest isn't to cuddle with you, but rather to kill you (John 10:10). This discouragement and attempted murder do not happen all at once or in some dramatic spiritual showdown. It happens in small increments. As Paul David Tripp pointed out in his work, *Age of Opportunity*, "Spiritual warfare makes us think of demon possession, horrific demonstrations of satanic control, and dramatic exorcisms. But Scripture presents spiritual warfare not as the violent, bizarre end of the Christian life, but as what the Christian life is (p. 116)!" Satan has mastered the art of throwing fiery darts that can pick us apart. These darts generally come to us in the form of lies; just as Satan lied to Adam and Eve.

In pastoral ministry and in our Christian walk in general, we can easily ignore or lose sight of the reality of Spiritual warfare because it is an invisible battle. Paul's plea to the church at Ephesus and to us today is, "Don't become so sophisticated that you think people are your enemy or that you can become sanctified by sheer will-power."

So how do we regularly recognize that we are in a spiritual war?

- First, by daily acknowledging that we are in a wrestling match. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul points to an attractive sport of his day, wrestling. He informs the church at Ephesus that everything that he has previously said to them – everything from heavenly spiritual blessings to a proper view of family life – will not be achieved without a fight. While we don't obsess over

(Continued on page 25)

Don't Become Too Sophisticated

Jamaal Williams

(Continued from page 24)

spiritual warfare, we can't ignore it either.

- Second, by actively embracing Jesus and his Good News every day. When Paul calls us to put on the whole armor, he is calling us to put on Christ. He is reminding us that the only way to defeat Satan is to know how to apply the good news of Jesus to our heart. For pastors, the helmet of Salvation is critical. Sometimes Satan tempts us – perhaps he tempts us more than anyone else – to believe that we have to earn God's or other people's acceptance or approval. The helmet of salvation reminds us that we were justified by grace.
- Third, we regularly recognize that we are in a spiritual war by intentionally and intensely praying. In Ephesians Chapter 6 Paul calls the Christians in Ephesus to pray at all times and for all people, especially himself. The more in tune we are with the reality of spiritual warfare, the more intensely we will pray. Sophisticated, cute prayers won't cut it.
- Fourth, by finding strength to fight in God and not ourselves. The Christian life is one of warfare, full of battles day after day. In our own strength, we are headed for certain disaster. Paul recognized this which is why he affirmed in Philippians that it was through Christ that he could do all things! As we continue to pursue God faithfully, we are equipped by His Spirit through His Word not only to survive but to thrive!

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (II Cor. 10:4-5).

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7 Satanic Strategies to Distract From Christianity

BY DAN DELZELL , SPECIAL TO CP



Dan Delzell is the pastor of Wellspring Lutheran Church in Papillion, Neb.

The Christian Post
CP Opinion
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Pretend for a moment that you believe both God and Satan are real beings. And that God is omnipresent, while Satan is a fallen angel who can only be in one place at one time. God of course being the Creator, and Satan being the created being.

OK, next. Pretend that Satan's heart became proud and he tried to usurp God's authority, and was quickly kicked out of heaven. This would have made him angry and confused, but certainly very focused. Pretend his hatred drives Him to oppose the purposes of God.

Next. Pretend that man, like Satan, has fallen from a place of safety in God's kingdom. And that man needs the blood which the Son of God comes to shed on a cross for the sins of the world. Pretend it's the only way for man to be forgiven and brought into a right relationship with God. Got it? Great.

Now in that scenario, what strategies might an intelligent evil angel devise to assail God's purposes and oppose His kingdom? Imagine Satan coming up with a worldwide plot, and utilizing other fallen angels who now serve him and his diabolical purposes. Imagine each of them being assigned a particular geographical territory in which to carry out their master's orders.

Can you picture it? Well then, just imagine Satan giving the following instructions to his army of fallen angels.

Strategy #1 - Convince man he is his own god. Trick man into believing he is not accountable to a Creator. In other words, get man to think the world revolves around him. Make man think others are either extremely impressed with him; or they think he is a loser. But either way, it must be all about man. We must turn his eyes inward rather than upward.

Strategy #2 - Raise up a bevy of false prophets who propose a variety of alternative religions. Any religion is OK, as long as it isn't Christianity. Any religious practices are fine, as long as they don't involve trusting Jesus and following Him as Lord of all. In fact, use false religion as a weapon against Christianity by convincing man that as long as the religion box is checked in his life, it will all turn out fine in the end.

Strategy #3 - Fan into flame man's sinful desires. Tempt him to give into those desires so that these habits become addictions driving man further from God. Place things in man's path which prompt him to compromise any allegiance to God's Word, and any commitment to holy living. Get man to hate others, hold grudges, and live with bitterness and resentment. Use lust, greed, jealousy, and every weapon at your disposal. Hold nothing back. And realize that your greatest

(Continued on page 27)

7 Satanic Strategies to Distract From Christianity

BY DAN DELZELL, SPECIAL TO CP

(Continued from page 26)

opportunities will occur the moment man steps across any one of God's boundary lines.

Strategy #4 - Speaking of God's Word, do whatever it takes to convince man that Scripture is nothing but a bunch of myths. It is not to be taken literally. Convince man that only "fundamentalists" are naive enough to believe such a thing. Since pride is our specialty, use it to incite man to think highly of his knowledge, as long as it doesn't involve true knowledge of Christ, and a reliance upon God's Word. We must undermine any confidence man places in the Word of God.

Strategy #5 - Use science against man. Lead man to think science provides all the answers he needs in life, and to reject any belief in the supernatural. This includes rejecting the notion of Satan, angels, miracles, and even God Himself.

Strategy #6 - Convince man that no one can really know whether or not there is life after death. Keep man so busy with activities in this world that he barely has time to think about deeper issues, such as eternity, and the immortality of the soul. Get man to view himself the way he views animals. He lives, and dies, and that's it.

Strategy #7 - Realize that many human beings will choose to believe heaven and hell exist. For those people, do anything necessary to convince them they must earn their way into heaven. Above all else, distract man from considering the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. No matter what, man must not hear that message. Do anything which distracts believers from spreading the message of salvation in your territory.

Well there you have it. Can you imagine Satan devising such a plan? That is, if he is real, and God is real, and the cross is man's only hope for salvation. It seems like it would be an effective plan. Many human beings would become ensnared by such enticing distractions.

If such strategies were actually being carried out, there would be plenty of evidence right before our eyes, right? Well, look carefully in the world today. What does the evidence suggest to you? Are these 7 strategies for distraction just an imaginative myth, or reality?

If you are too blind to see the Savior today, you probably don't even recognize the very things which are being used to confuse and distract you. Such is the nature of spiritual warfare.

Or did you think the devil was going to show up in a red suit with a pitchfork?

Dan Delzell is the pastor of Wellspring Lutheran Church in Papillion, Neb. He is a regular contributor to The Christian Post.

Christianity Is Losing in America

By Craig Dunkley



American Thinker
January 14, 2015

Craig Dunkley is a marketing and public relations executive. He is also founder and editor of Logic & Light, a website dedicated to Christian apologetics.

Christianity is under attack in America, and it's losing. Meanwhile, the Church is, in general, sitting out the fight and hoping the problem goes away.

Hope is not a strategy. It's time to act.

Since its inception, the United States has been a predominantly Christian nation, though open-minded and founded on religious tolerance. Our sense of personal freedom and tolerance, backed by a thoroughly Judeo-Christian worldview, has contributed mightily to this nation's greatness. That worldview, and the Christian faith behind it, is being whittled away by the media, our popular culture, and a newly emboldened "activist atheist" movement. The pace of that whittling has accelerated over the last decade.

Atheism and "Nones" Rising

Data from the Pew Research Center shows that those who consider themselves atheist, agnostic, or unaffiliated with any religion have been rising as a percentage of the U.S. population. In 2012, nearly 20% of the public fell into one of those categories, up nearly 5 percentage points over the preceding 5 years. When focusing on adults under 30, about one third consider themselves atheist, agnostic, or unaffiliated. Almost exclusively, the gains in these groups reflect losses for Christians, with Christians dropping from 78% to 73% of the population over the same period. Doubtless, the trend has continued.

Lies and Misinformation

Christianity's retreat is facilitated by a new breed of authors and "scholars" who have worked hard to undermine the most basic teachings of Christianity. With the help of a sympathetic media, they've captured the public's imagination. Their impact has been significant.

For example, from the likes of the late Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Bart Ehrman, Sam Harris, Reza Aslan, Simcha Jacobovici, and others, we have "learned" that:

The New Testament is full of errors and alterations, and we can't even figure out what the original texts said. Neither Jesus nor his early followers considered him divine. The whole idea that Jesus is the "Son of God" came about centuries after Jesus' death. Jesus was actually just a poor, illiterate bumpkin who preached about the end of the world. The early church ruthlessly – and violently – silenced "heretics." As a result, many valid writings were hidden from people because they were damaging to orthodox Christianity. The whole Jesus story was just a rip-off of other "dying and rising" god myths, common in ancient times. The traditionally accepted authors of the four canonical gospels could not have been the real authors. Christianity has killed and persecuted millions over the centuries, including "pagans," heretical Christians, and thousands of Muslims during those first acts of Christian imperialism, the

(Continued on page 29)

Christianity Is Losing in America

By Craig Dunkley

(Continued from page 28)

Crusades. Archeological discoveries have proven time and again that the Bible is untrustworthy as a work of history. The Bible is riddled with inconsistencies that render it invalid. Christianity encourages scientific illiteracy because it teaches that the Earth is the center of the universe and that it's just 6,000 years old. Many more "facts" that serve to undermine the faith.

There is one problem common to all of the "facts" mentioned above: they're demonstrably wrong, or else they take a tiny bit of truth and distort it beyond all recognition. For example, the assertion that Jesus was not considered divine until a vote of church leaders at the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., an oft-repeated myth, is absurd. The Council did not debate whether Jesus was divine. Rather, it debated the nature of his divinity: was he the created Son of God – sort of like an "über-Angel" – or was he a pre-existent being, co-equal with God? The Council decided, based on scriptural interpretation, that Jesus was the latter. His basic divinity was never doubted.

In another example, some authors are fond of pointing out uncanny similarities between the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and the stories of a range of other "dying and rising" gods, such as Mithras, Attis, and Dionysus. This is done in an effort to paint the Jesus story as just a rip-off of earlier myths. A closer analysis, however, reveals that most of these alleged similarities were either fabricated or wildly misrepresented. In a number of cases, such as that of Mithras, some similarities were genuine but were developed long after Jesus' death by pagan cult members to boost their own movement's credibility. In other words, it was Jesus who got ripped off!

For each of the "facts" listed above, there are highly sound, historically accurate rebuttals. Yet these myths are repeated ad infinitum by some "scholars," authors, bloggers, popular media outlets, and ill-informed atheist activists all over this nation.

Their incessant "cut and paste" mentality on the internet has established a strong base of content that is now in the process of fooling many Christians into abandoning their faith, while turning away many otherwise open-minded "seekers." A textbook example is the shamefully inaccurate cover story on Christianity, "The Bible: So Misunderstood It's a Sin," published on December 23, 2014 by Newsweek.

In addition, a confident-feeling activist atheist community is working to reinforce the notion that anyone who turns to religion (especially Christianity) is an intellectual weakling who believes in fairy tales. Consider the latest ad campaign by American Atheists. The net result of all this is a rising number of people who consider themselves atheist or agnostic.

Churches on the Sidelines

It's important to note that churches do fantastic work. Christian charities help people across the globe, Christian missionaries risk life and limb to spread the faith abroad, and churches provide comfort and support to millions. But churches are not properly equipping their members to combat the lies being spread about their faith.

(Continued on page 30)

Christianity Is Losing in America

By Craig Dunkley



American Thinker
January 14, 2015

Craig Dunkley is a marketing and public relations executive. He is also founder and editor of *Logic & Light*, a website dedicated to Christian apologetics.

(Continued from page 29)

People raised in church are often taught what the Bible says, and many can recite key passages, chapter and verse. However, they are not often taught about the specific anti-Christian myths that have been developed, nor are they taught the data-backed responses to them.

In short, churches are not teaching their members enough about Christian apologetics. This leaves church members unable to respond effectively when their beliefs are challenged. As a result, they often come to doubt what they've been taught, and they are certainly ill-equipped to help "win over" friends or acquaintances who may be seekers "on the fence."

Younger Christians are the most vulnerable, particularly when heading off to college. It's in college that a young Christian is most likely to have his or her beliefs seriously challenged, be it by professors, atheist students, or both. He must be prepared to deal with this challenge. This reality was brought home to the author by an e-mail, sent by a friend. In part, it read:

I know what you mean about faith being challenged. I grew up in a Christian school where we learned Bible verses and attended chapel every Friday. We were taught 'truths' and were expected to absorb them at face value. It was a good foundation of faith, but it was just faith, and not supported by true 'knowledge,' if that makes sense...I was completely unprepared to defend my faith when Biblical inconsistencies were pointed out in college. I signed up for a 'Religion' class thinking that I would pass with flying colors because of my years of education. Surprise. The first lecture and assignment in the class was about all the discrepancies within the Old Testament. I had never been taught about the Bible from a historical or factual perspective...

The Need for Apologetics

It's time for churches to join the fight. It's not acceptable to "duck and cover" and wait for this to pass. It won't. Lies and misinformation must be countered with truth and logic in an open and loving way. Churches must get serious about creating apologetics ministries to educate their members, prepare their youth groups, and spread the word. Every Christian should understand the attacks that are being launched against the Christian faith, and be prepared to counter them. Strong apologetics ministries will inoculate Christians against these attacks and equip them to win over those bystanders trying to find their own paths to faith.

These apologetics ministries should also be open and directed toward the general public, inviting open-minded seekers, as well as committed Christians to attend. These ministries should make ample use of social media and other online resources to maximize their reach.

If Christians do not answer the call now, then even more people will turn away from Christianity because they think it's not for them...when it might be exactly what they're seeking in their lives.

<http://www.americanthinker.com/>

<http://www.logicandlight.org/>



A New Commandment

Bishop Nancy Drew

As ministers we are often called on to be with people in their most private and desperate of situations. They look to us for support in times of need. Often times they do not understand what is happening to them or why they find themselves in the situation that they are in when they have loved and honored God in every way they knew how. In some of these situations we are called on to counsel with family members as well in how to help their loved one who need those who love them most and know them best to be close to them.

Job's friends give us a picture of the kind of friend as well as minister not to be.

In the much taught and sermonized story of Job we see a man who loved God and his family. Job was a man of prayer and a generous man as well.

God was actually proud of Job and of his relationship with his God. Job found confusing the tragedies that he faced in losing his children who he had interceded for daily. He lost material possessions though he had generously shared what he had. There was a lot of "why" in Job's life. His wife was angry with God and with Job when he needed her to be near and work through the process together of what they were experiencing. Job needed people who knew how to pray for him, listen to him, love him, be supportive in their actions and be present but instead he was given more burden to carry by having to deal with friends and family who were judgmental. They failed to show compassion or empathy for Job in his trial when he had been there so many times for them when he was needed. There are some people that we just do not need around when we are going through trials. We as ministers need to make sure that we are a blessing rather than an additional burden when we seek to minister to the hurting, the confused and disillusioned. Job's friends give us a picture of the kind of friend as well as minister not to be. We can all probably think of an example where we have had contact with "friends" like these. I know I can.

(Continued on page 32)



Bishop Nancy Drew

A New Commandment

Bishop Nancy Drew

Our challenge? To reveal Jesus Christ.

Job's friend Eliphaz was a religious man. In his mind Job must have done something to deserve the tragedies that he was enduring and the heartbreak that he was going through. We know from the narrative that this is not the case but here is what Eliphaz had to say, *"Job, I know you're in a lot of pain right now, but I'd like to have a word with you. You've offered counsel and encouragement to lots of troubled people in the past. And you've been the first to support those who have stumbled. But now it's obvious you're discouraged regarding the trouble that has come to you. I know you think you're a righteous man. But let me ask you a question: When have you ever heard of an innocent man being destroyed?"* Job 4:2-7. Eliphaz lacked understanding of Job's situation and was out of touch with the reality of

**Our challenge?
To reveal
Jesus Christ.**



Job's pain. Eliphaz made his speaking what he wanted to say to Job more important than what Job might have shared. Eliphaz then discounts Job's past good deeds because now Job is facing his own ordeal. Eliphaz minimized the tragedy and loss Job was experiencing by reducing Job's heartbreak to only "discouragement." He was out of touch with human feeling and would not let Job experience his pain the way he needed to get through it. Difficult times are not an arena to be super spiritual or to show off our prayer wares for our own gain at the expense of the wounded. It is not a time to tell stories of our triumphs or share our own burdens when their grief is so raw. Jesus came to bind the broken hearted. This is our call as well. However, a religious spirit talks out of the soul-ish realm rather than seeking the

heart and the mind of the Spirit for the one they are ministering to. Those with religious spirits may not understand brokenness because they have never been there themselves. When we experience breaking from the Lord it infuses us with His sweetness. Religion sorely lacks the balm of Gilead. In contrast Jeremiah felt the pain of his people, *"For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"* (Jer. 8:21-22) Job didn't need religion. He needed relationship. He needed a listening ear. Job needed someone who knew how to touch God's heart for him. It is important that we make the decision that when those around us are suffering that we will seek to be like Christ. That we will seek God's Spirit. That we will place the need of the one we are with ahead of ourselves and our ambitions and what we think we know. If we cannot do this we would do better to let someone else help. For the wounded warrior: Do not feel bad avoiding the counsel of religiosity.

It is interesting that Job's friends were less in relationship with God than was Job. Sometime this is the case. Sometime ministers are called on to minister to other ministers who have a deeper walk than they do. Sometime ministers are called on to minister to parish-

A New Commandment

Bishop Nancy Drew

(Continued from page 32)

ioners who have a deeper walk with God than they do. This, however, will be no excuse to burden the hurting with our lack of depth. We can give what is needed through love and sensitivity and by being real ourselves. Job had another friend named Bildad. Bildad lacked the depth of understanding and maturity of Job. Bildad was an idealist. He believed in the highest excellence and anything else would be unacceptable. As unrealistic as it might be, perfection was the goal for him. Bildad did not know how to be real and was uncomfortable with Job's honest pain and questioning. However, none of us are perfect. Not Job and not Bildad but here is what Bildad had to say to Job, *"God doesn't pervert justice. You know your children died because of their sin. So, I think it's high time that you plead with God for your own life. If you are the righteous man you think you are, He will restore your health and other losses. If history teaches us anything, it teaches us that God won't reject the righteous or bless the wicked"* (Job 8:1-7). Job needed to be allowed to be human. He did not need the demands of idealism placed on him. Bildad did not know the heart of God as revealed through Timothy *"All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (2 Tim. 3:12,) nor did he understand that God says the rains fall on the just and the unjust. Those who walk with God do not have perfect lives. They face many trials and it is for us as ministers to let them know that they are loved and accepted in the Beloved. Suffering and trials produces godliness in our character when we allow the Lord to form us to His image but Bildad did not see this through his philosophy of how the world works. In Bildad's mind, it was sin that had brought Job's troubles and he judged Job accordingly. As ministers we must remember that Jesus said He did not come to condemn or judge the world but to save it. We must let God break from us any false ideas of how God views suffering and trouble. Jesus told us that in this world we would have trouble but that He had overcome the world. When Jesus was asked if a man was born blind because of the sins of his parents, He responded, *"Neither this man nor his parents sinned. Instead, he was born blind so that God could show what He can do for him."* (John 9:3) The blindness was for the glory of God just as Job's trials would ultimately be for the glory of God. We can ask God to take our own blindness from us as well so that we can see people and circumstances as He sees them that we might bring glory to Him because of what He has done for us. Wounded warriors: you do not have to pamper the egos of the expectations of unrealistic idealism or perfection.

The third of Job's "miserable comforters" (Job 16:1) was Zophar. Zophar shared the same thoughts as Eliphaz and Bildad but with the added burden of legalism. He thought that God is just; so in Zophar's mind that translated to "everybody gets what's coming to them." Zophar said to Job, *"He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him."* among a long list of other "what happens" to the wicked. Job confronted him but rather than thinking that Job might have a point, Zophar was waiting for his opportunity to share his

(Continued on page 34)



Bishop Nancy Drew

A New Commandment

Bishop Nancy Drew

point of view as quickly as possible, "*Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste.*" He was in a hurry to say what he thought about what Job thought and expressed but Proverbs says "those who believe don't make haste." Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their legalism saying. "*The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat (as teachers of the Torah). Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.*" (Matt 23:1-4) We must not be guilty of causing the word of God to lose its authority because of us and our actions toward the hurting and wounded around us because we choose legalism over love. Wounded warriors: you have been saved from judgment. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

The main flaw in each of the friends of Job was that they did not know the God they professed to serve. If they had, they would have been lead by the Spirit of God in their dealings with Job. They believed in God but did not *know* Him. Our relationship with Christ Jesus, God the Father and Holy Spirit will be revealed under pressure. Out of our relationship with the Lord we can be relational when needed with those who are suffering. Job did not see God in his friends when Job needed to see God the most. Laying aside religiosity, false expectations of perfection and legalism that burdens, let us be revealers of Christ Jesus, lights in the darkness. Jesus challenges us when He said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:33-34). Jobs friends knew that God wanted them to love Job and they may have thought that was what they were doing. Jesus did not give a new commandment to love. That command was already stated. The new commandment that was given was to love as He loves. That is the new commandment. When we love as Jesus loves people will see God and they will recognize Christ. We will not be known, remembered, by our knowledge of scripture, our ability to pray creatively and long, by our position, the victories we have known, how well we followed the rules or the ideals we held up high. We will be known, remembered and Jesus revealed by how we loved.



A Psalm for Good Friday

A Psalm for Good Friday

Is there no song I can sing to the Lord?

For there is no way for my voice to be raised

My Lord, my God has been taken from me

His presence in my life has been reft from me

His path has led Him to the depths of the Pit

To suffer the death and disgrace that are truly mine to bear

I am left alone, a wanderer in the pathless void

I long for His return

I yearn for the sound of His voice

May the day of His victory come swiftly

That I may be saved from the darkness of His absence

The Rev. Craig S. Felde



Welcome

It is with great Joy and Blessing, to say that I am very grateful and excited to be a part of the LEPC! My Name is Nicole A.M. Collins and just this past December 5th, I was approved for Ordination and held a

service for family and friends on January 17th, 2015 at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Chicago

I come from a bi-vocational background being that my first career was in the fine arts (I taught college-level painting and Art History as well as exhibited professionally) and now I am in ministry! I hold 3 masters (a dual degree for MDiv equivalency & an MFA) and a Bachelors in Art: BFA. My movement from Art into ministry came out of my conversion experience in the fall of 2003. It was at a small little Lutheran church on the North side of Chicago, where I would hear God's voice speaking to me through this one Sunday's service.... I have witnessed to that moment many a times. It was from that initial encounter of hearing God's voice to my heart that I began my spiritual formation journey to becoming a pastor.

The Lord's Amazing Grace placed key experiences and people in my path that I feel I am still reaping the blessings from. Back in December of 2011, my mentoring pastor, a number of people and myself left the ELCA to embark on planting a new kind of church centered on Discipleship and Spiritual Formation. The Spring of 2012 saw the birth of the Gathering For Christ (Lutheran-rooted) church in Lombard, Illinois and January of 2014 saw the birth of the Gathering North in Glenview, Illinois: <http://thegatheringnorth4christ.weebly.com/> to which I am currently serving as the Spiritual Formation Pastor. Neither plant has a building, we meet at the Hampton and Courtyard Marriott hotels in their meeting rooms. At the moment, they are still wanting to stay unaffiliated Lutherans or "Lutherans in limbo," but I have begun planting my own church ministry which will be an LEPC chartered ministry called the Grace Hub Discipleship Ministries: <http://gracehubdiscipleshipministries.weebly.com/>

My dreams for answering the Lord's call and commission upon me through the Grace Hub will be to eventually secure a storefront location to have and host several ministries. Some of these ministries I want to fuse my continued interest in Art into. I would like to have a Christian Art gallery as well as publish devotionals and theological works alongside hosting weddings, services, family and marriage counseling, catechism classes and numerous Bible studies. Currently the Grace Hub is planted as an online ministry. I am looking into funding to eventually record entire services to post online. Right now I am only posting my sermons. Here is my YouTube channel for Nicole Collins: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCn65Mx8ci6ADGP9hd7KUCuw>

I am blessed to have a wonderfully supportive husband, Phil & our two children of another species, Sedie and Issy. We currently live in the far northwest suburb of Chicago— Mundelein, Illinois. Outside of serving both the Gathering North and The Grace Hub, my husband and I have taken in a parishioner from the Gathering North who was recently widowed, is disabled and needs 24/7 care. I am currently in the process of seeking certification to become her official caregiver. Additional ministry goals I am aspiring towards is to become an ACPE board certified chaplain to enable me to seek additional employ as a hospice chaplain or hospital chaplain.

I will always be grateful for the genuine and welcoming reception I have received in becoming a part of the LEPC; It is beyond refreshing and truly encouraging! I have as well begun to spread the word to some of my colleagues. Soon I would expect a few of my friends to be seeking candidacy through the LEPC for their ecumenical and truly missional grounded focus! I am looking forward to where God will lead me in building ministries through the LEPC; it will truly be a life-long journey!

Peace & Blessings to you all!
Rev. Nicole A.M. Collins

"Be Prepared"

January 26, 2015

(Jesus said) "But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:36

Some people have great insight and an almost prophetic view of what the future is going to hold. Maybe you are such a person. I am not. That being said, there are times when the handwriting on the wall is big enough, bold enough, legible and obvious enough, that no great revelation is necessary.

2015 may be one of those times.

Looking over subjects for these Daily Devotions I was confronted by a series of **HEADLINES** in which experts looked back at last year and forward into this year. The following list some of these unaltered headlines:

- * "Open Doors: Worst Persecution Yet to Come"
- * "Christian Persecution on the Rise Worldwide According to New Report"
- * "No Room in America for Christian Refugees"
- * "Open Doors: Islamic Militants Killed Twice as Many Christians in 2014 than 2013"
- * "2014 Saw Worst Persecution of Chinese Christians in a Generation"

Now there are many who, having looked at those stories, would say, "Well, things are still okay in our country. At least there's no persecution here."

My friends, I rejoice that there are still those who have not been touched by religious hatred and prejudice. My prayers will continue to ask that their lives may be lived without ever personally seeing how much the world despises the Savior.

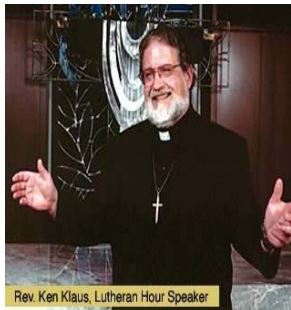
But what can we say to those who believe there may be some dark days ahead for believers? How shall we answer those who want to know how the church can best invest its time and spend its energy, so believers might be prepared for such tough times?

First, we need to remember that the Lord Jesus has won the ultimate victory over sin, death and devil. While there are still good-and-evil skirmishes being fought in this world, God's Word and Sacraments assure us that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God, which is ours via Christ's life, death and rising.

Second, we need to make sure our young people are prepared for difficult days. Now, while we have time, we need to lovingly and thoroughly educate them in the fundamentals of the faith and the tricks and temptations they may encounter. While there are many things a 21st-century church needs to do, I can think of none that would be a better investment than training and warning our children to be faithful.

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, be with those around the world who are being persecuted for their faith. Hold them fast and let them be a bold witness to the power of the Savior in the lives of His saints. This I ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

In Christ I remain His servant and yours,



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

The “Back Page”

Onward Christian Soldiers

*Onward, Christian solders,
marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
going on before!
Christ, the royal Master,
leads again the foe;
Forward into battle,
see his banner go!*

*Refrain:
Onward, Christian soldiers,
marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
going on before!*

*2 At the sign of triumph
Satan's host doth flee;
On, then, Christian soldiers,
on to victory!
Hell's foundations quiver
at the shout of praise;
Brothers, lift your voices,
loud your anthems raise! [Refrain]*

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?



*3 Like a mighty army
moves the church of God;
Brothers, we are
treading
where the saints
have trod;
We are not di-
vided;
all one body we,
One in hope and
doctrine,
one in charity.
[Refrain]*

*4 Onward, then,
ye people,
join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices
in the triumph song;
Glory, laud, and honor,
unto Christ the King;
This thro' countless ages
men and angels sing. [Refrain]*

*Sabine Baring-Gould (b. Exeter, Eng-
land, 1834; d. Lew Trenchard, Eng-
land, 1924), curate of a mission church
at Horbury Bridge, Yorkshire, Eng-
land, wrote this text in 1864 for a chil-
dren's Pentecost Sunday procession.*



Steve & Teddy 9/28/1951

Written in 1864 to show the unity of children from neighboring towns, this could very well be the anthem of the 21st Century for Christians everywhere.

As Christianity continues to get pummeled in the press and in the world at large it is important that we as Christians fight back, not with swords, but with the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

We must stand together proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus to a world spinning into control of the devil.

The threat is very real and will not be won by violence, it must be won by prayer and love.

We need to be on our knees praying for our enemies.

He warned us that there would be days like these...get busy
Pastor Steve



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

