

The Lutheran WITNESS

OCTOBER 2003

VOL. 122 NO. 9



God and the Gay Lifestyle

Also:

*The Alabama Judge and
the Ten Commandments
Finding Joy in the Ministry*





The Lutheran WITNESS

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

Features

OCTOBER 2003

6 GOD AND THE GAY LIFESTYLE by David L. Mahsman

Homosexuality seems more and more acceptable to American society. Is homosexual behavior suddenly OK?



Getty Images

16 'EVERY DAY IS SPECIAL' by Roland Lovstad

Joy in the ministry runs high among pastors.

20 THE JUDGE AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS Should Lutherans support Chief Justice Roy Moore in his battle to keep a monument to the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building?

No. by David L. Adams
Yes. by John W. Tape

24 SUSAN'S FRIEND by Carol Albrecht

Susan believed she just didn't have the knack to witness for Jesus, especially to her closest friend. Could she find a way to tell of His love?

10 THE CHRISTIAN'S STRUGGLE WITH SEXUAL TEMPTATION by Charles L. Manske

"Gay" or "straight," sin is sin. But God has not left us to struggle alone.

12 RADIO MINISTRY by Joe Isenhower Jr.

For 25 years, one congregation in Wisconsin has been beaming the Gospel worldwide.

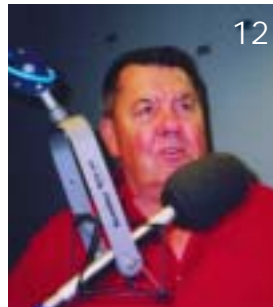


Photo courtesy of Paul Schroeder

Departments



Photo courtesy Karen Higgins

3 Lifeline
Karen Higgins

4 Letters

14 National News

22 Family Counselor

23 Searching Scripture
Andrew Simcak Jr.

26 Notices

27 Q&A/
Shedding Some Light

28 From the President
Gerald B. Kieschnick

Hope for Eternity
Page 24



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

Staff: Rev. David L. Mahsman, executive editor; Don Folkemer, managing editor; Joe Isenhower Jr., news editor; Paula Schlueter Ross, contributing editor; John Krus, senior designer; Corinne Latimer, marketing manager; Pam Burgdorf, coordinator; Marcy Hanewinkel, advertising sales; Carla Dubbelde, editorial manager, district editions; Karen Higgins, editorial assistant; editorial office: 1333 S. Kirkwood Rd., St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; (314) 965-9917, Ext. 1228.

© 2003 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Reproduction of a single article or column for parish use only does not require permission of THE LUTHERAN WITNESS. Such reproductions, however, should credit THE LUTHERAN WITNESS as the source. Cover images and "Shedding Some Light" cartoons are not reproducible without permission. Also, photos credited to sources outside the LCMS are not to be copied.

Published 11 times per year by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. Individual subscription \$18.48 per year. Organized congregation subscriptions and district editions offered at reduced rate if submitted through local churches. Standard A postage paid at St. Louis, MO.

For subscription information or address changes, e-mail: cphorder@cph.org

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

Member: Associated Church Press
Evangelical Press Association

October 2003 (ISSN: 0024-757X) Vol. 122, No 9

Cover Photo: Douglas McFadd/Getty Images

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



Lutheran teachers

I am humbled and privileged (and excited) to have been given the opportunity to take part in the colloquy program and eagerly await the day of colloquy itself.

*Llisa McCabe
Grand Rapids, Mich.*

RE. "WHO'S TEACHING OUR CHILDREN?,"
Aug. '03:

Even though I am only three classes into my colloquy, I feel a deeper and richer understanding of my Lutheran heritage, an appreciation for the individuals whom God chose to use through history to accomplish His purpose, and most of all through my studies, a closer relationship with God, a strengthening and affirming of my faith and more than ever a sense of awe and wonder that God extended His grace to me.

I want my students to see Christ's love in me, to know that they are loved and special to God, to feel the joy and peace that faith and trust in God brings, and to know that God is there to see them through the tough times on earth and that He has provided for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ.

*Carol Stetzler
Morton, Ill.*

EVEN BEING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE colloquy program, I believe there has been a significant impact for me that directly affects my students. I want to share the love that Christ has for each and every one of us. I have gained a better understanding of other denominations and have strengthened my knowledge of Lutheranism. I am more confident when talking about the different aspects of religion and want the students to feel confident about religion as well.

*Kimberly Marks
Peoria, Ill.*

THE ARTICLE SUGGESTS THAT THE primary reason congregations have been forced to recruit teachers from the public sector is the rapid expansion of Lutheran schools. I suggest there are other reasons:

1. Our schools are not training the number of men and women needed to staff our schools. Recruitment, especially by those in the teaching ministry who love their vocations, is vital.

2. New teachers become frustrated and discouraged. Mentors could help encourage beginning teachers and get them over the initial overwhelming aspects of their vocation. Administrators could play a role in this adjustment.

3. The salaries in many Lutheran schools are inadequate. Often the wage is not enough to support a family. In my congregation, there are eight synodically trained teachers who are no longer in Lutheran school ministry. Three teach in public schools, one in private school and four are in other careers. All are still members of the congregation. (Throughout our system, there are rostered teachers who teach for awhile and then leave. We need to ask, "Why?")

Perhaps a four-pronged effort is in order: recruitment, mentoring, colloquy and retention.

*Jacqueline S. Rullman
Winston-Salem, N.C.*

I AGREE THAT PROPER THEOLOGICAL training for teachers in our Lutheran schools is of utmost importance, but I am frustrated at your portrayal of teachers who are not on the Synod's teacher roster. Many educators in our schools have been educated in synodical colleges and universities but have chosen to be removed from the roster for tax purposes. If both partners in a marriage are considered "ministers of religion," the tax burden is just too great. Often one partner will choose not to be rostered.

I would be much more interested in a statistic that demonstrates how many of our teachers are synodically trained, regardless of whether they are rostered.

*Lisa Krenz
Hoffman, Ill.*

Of the 18,000 teachers in Missouri Synod schools, 12,000 are not on the Synod's teacher roster. Of that 12,000, only 1,100 indicate on their records that they are graduates of an LCMS college or university. That does not mean, however, that even all of the 1,100 have had the same theological education as have those who are on the roster.—Ed.

OUR COUNTRY HAD ONLY ABOUT 75,000 prisoners in 1922, but has about 2,000,000 today. What has remained constant, according to the *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.*, is that 70 percent of all men in prison come from fatherless homes. The other 30 percent of the men in prison were exposed as children to the bad elements in our society.

I believe it is unwise to place our children at risk in the majority of our public schools. The best

thing I know to do is to provide church schooling for our children. If we don't do this, the church will not be a viable force in 50 to 100 years (as is the case in England today).

*Anthony Rust
Brownstown, Ind.*

Missions on fire

I DON'T SEE ANYTHING CRAZY ABOUT reaching 100 million souls by 2017 ("Ablaze," Aug. '03). Many would have called Jesus crazy, too. I think we may well surpass that goal.

First we must get past this controversy that is gripping our beloved synod. As my brother pointed out to me once, Jesus' seven last words were not "we never did it that way before." Come on, people. Let's start witnessing to our neighbors and thereby fill up our churches.

*Dale Kimball
Spirit Lake, Iowa*

CAN A WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF SOME 4 million Lutherans really share the Good News of Jesus with 100 million people? Jesus identifies this as "the work of God" (John 6:28, 29). Reacting to a humanly impossible task, God said, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14a).

The Bible says that our sovereign God is both *able* and *faithful*. My prayer is that He will give us faith to trust Him in *this His work*.

*Wayne Spiering
Jacksonville, Fla.*

We welcome letters that comment on articles in The Lutheran Witness. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Send letters to "Letters," c/o The Lutheran Witness, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to Lutheran.Witness@LCMS.org.

After his confirmation by the Episcopal House of Bishops in Minneapolis on Aug. 5 to be the next bishop of New Hampshire, Rev. V. Gene Robinson left, appeared at a news conference with his daughter, Ella, and his partner of 14 years, Mark Andrew.



GOD AND THE GAY LIFESTYLE

*Homosexuality seems more and more acceptable to American society.
Is homosexual behavior suddenly OK?*

by David L. Mahsman

“Gay is hot,” said a recent story in the New York *Daily News*. “The U.S. Supreme Court knocked down an anti-sodomy law in Texas,” it continued. “The TV show ‘Queer Eye for the Straight Guy’ is a smash hit. And Madonna and Britney Spears swapped spit last week at the MTV music awards.”

It certainly appears that homosexuality continues to gain ground as an acceptable “alternative lifestyle” in American society. And this seems true in church as well as in state (or in pop culture).

In August, the Episcopal Church, USA, approved its first-ever openly gay bishop. And while its General Convention declined a proposal to authorize drafting a standard rite for blessing same-sex unions, it did say, “We recognize that local faith communities are operating

within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions.”

Is homosexual behavior suddenly OK?

‘A momentous break’

Rev. V. Gene Robinson, who is divorced, has two daughters and has been with a male partner for 14 years. A priest for 30 years, he was elected in June by the New Hampshire diocese to be its next bishop and confirmed in August by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

The day after Robinson’s confirmation as bishop, President Gerald Kieschnick of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod released a statement.

“While it is clear from God’s Word that His forgiving love in Jesus Christ is constant for all people,” Kieschnick said, “this action nevertheless constitutes a momentous break from the Christian Church’s 2,000-year-long understanding of what the Holy Scriptures teach about homosexual behavior as contrary to God’s will and the Biblical qualifications for holding the pastoral office.”

The decision, he said, will be “deeply divisive” in the Episcopal Church and the larger Anglican Communion, and it will be controversial throughout Christendom.

“It is my sincere hope that the Episcopal Church, USA, would reconsider their decision in the light of the Biblical understanding of human sexuality and the qualifications for the pastoral office,” Kieschnick said.

He raised the issue again less than a week later as he brought greetings to the biennial Church-wide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which was meeting in Milwaukee.

The ELCA has a “full communion” relationship with the Episcopal Church and is itself confronting very similar issues. The 2005 ELCA assembly will be asked to decide whether or not people in committed homosexual relationships are to be ordained in

that church and whether or not the ELCA should have an official policy on blessing same-sex unions.

“Foremost among the challenges to the church’s witness to the world is remaining faithful to Holy Scripture as we study and respond to some of the great moral issues of the day,” Kieschnick told the ELCA assembly Aug. 13.

Then he referred to what the Episcopalians had done a week earlier and spoke words similar to what he had said about those actions: “I pray that your study of deliberation of this matter will be made in the light of the Biblical understanding of human sexuality and the qualifications for the pastoral office.”

“Foremost among the challenges to the church’s witness to the world is remaining faithful to Holy Scripture as we study and respond to some of the great moral issues of the day.”

Same-sex unions

In a separate statement this summer, Kieschnick spoke also in defense of traditional marriage. The catalysts were two court decisions: one by the U.S. Supreme

Karen O’Brien Ahlers and Michelle Joanne Blair (pictured here and on the cover) were “married” recently in the First Parish Church of Framingham, Mass. Officiant Troy Liston proclaimed them married, “Through no power invested in me by the state or any religious institution, but instead through the power invested in me by your family, friends and the two of you, and, in defiance of current interpretation of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.” The supreme court of Massachusetts is debating gay marriage. A ruling is expected at any time.



Court, declaring unconstitutional a Texas anti-sodomy law; the other, in Canada, an Ontario court ruling that overturned the definition of marriage there as the union of a man and a woman.

“There is a principle in the legal profession that, when translated from the Latin, says: ‘The law also teaches.’ What concerns many Christians about these two recent court decisions is that the law helps to shape public morality,” Kieschnick said. “What concerns us is whether these and similar laws, by their capacity to teach and shape, will lead our society to re-think its definitions of marriage and family.”

Kieschnick said he could support a proposed constitutional amendment that would ban homosexual marriage. The proposed amendment would state that “marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.”

By contrast, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien has declared his determination to make same-sex “marriages” legal throughout his country.

Said Kieschnick in his statement:

“According to the Scriptures and to centuries of traditional law, homosexual marriages are condemned as being aberrant, against the will of God and ‘unnatural.’ By God’s design, marriage has always meant the union of ‘bride’ and ‘groom’ (gender-specific terms) — which are then ‘wife’ and ‘husband,’ ‘mother’ and ‘father,’ of the family.

“This is not just Christian thinking, an attempt to foist Christian morality on a pluralistic society. Marriage, at all times and in all civilizations, has always meant the union of a man and a woman in a permanent relationship. The institution is trans-cultural, trans-religious, trans-historical.

“To tinker with its meaning, to change the fundamental vocabulary of what ‘marriage’ has meant throughout the history of the world, is to eat away at the edges of



Homosexuality has achieved a high profile in America, especially in the entertainment media. One of television’s biggest hits during the past summer was “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” a program featuring five gay men who give a makeover to a heterosexual man.

Homosexual behavior, like any sin, can be forgiven. That’s quite a different thing, of course, than to say that such behavior is OK.

our society. It is to threaten the very center of that society—the family unit—through which society is continued and new life comes into being.

“The essential differences between a man and a woman are many and profound. Yet God has instituted loving marriage to integrate these differences into a whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts. This amazing whole is essential for raising children—with both a mother and a father. In fact, children instinctively yearn for both a male and female role model. God’s

divine plan for a family is just that—mother, father and children—not a father/father or mother/mother arrangement. Same-sex marriages are thus an affront to the very human nature God, our Creator, gave us.

“Granting the status of marriage to same-sex unions requires that we sacrifice the timeless meanings of marriage and family for the sake of sexual freedom. It is the wrong

choice to make, and yet it is precisely the choice that our society—the voters, courts, Congress and even the churches—may be asked to make. I pray we think about what is at stake before stepping onto the slippery slope of same-sex marriage.”

‘A categorical prohibition’

The ordination of gay and lesbian clergy and same-sex unions are controversial issues in the Episcopal Church, as well as in the ELCA and in a number of other

Christian churches.

This is reflected, for example, in a letter written by Episcopal Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold to the bishops of his church following Robinson's election in New Hampshire. Griswold noted, "Great joy and deep distress are emotions being felt by many within our church. Some view the election as prophetic and an action of the Holy Spirit, while others view it as disregarding Scripture, Tradition and the larger view of the Anglican Communion"

The Missouri Synod has its own disagreements and controversies, of course. But what the Bible says about homosexuality—and the conviction that Scripture is the final authority on the matter—isn't one of them.

Over the years, the Synod has adopted convention resolutions that speak to the issue; the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) included a section on homosexuality in its 1981 report, "Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective"; and a presidential task force in 1999 published "A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families."

"Homosexuality comes under a categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; 1 Tim. 1:9–10)," says the CTCR report. It says, "In discussing the sins which follow upon man's refusal to honor God as Creator of all things (Rom. 1:26–32), the apostle Paul singles out the sins of homosexual behavior for special comment. Such behavior comes under God's judgment not because it is any more heinous than the 21 vices listed in 1:29–31, but because it, too, illustrates man's rebellion against his Creator."

Likewise, a 2001 convention resolution that commends the 1999 ministry plan to the Synod's congre-

gations "as a resource for study and a guide for pastoral care" notes that "the law of God declares homosexual lust and activity to be sin and contrary to the created order" (Rom. 1:24–27).

But neither the CTCR report nor convention resolutions leave the matter with words of condemnation.

"While not minimizing the threat of God's wrath against all forms of enslavement to sin, the church needs to recognize in its efforts to help the homosexual that all people are born in need of deliverance from the effects which sin has imposed on their lives," says the CTCR.

The 2001 convention resolution, after noting that Scripture says homosexual activity constitutes sin against God, also reminds us that:

- "The Gospel declares that Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2) and that Christ, who knew no sin, was made to be our sin so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21)."
- "The church's proper evangelical work is to proclaim the reconciliation of the sinner to God in the death of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:18–19)."
- "Holy Baptism leads us to daily contrition and repentance for all our sins of thought, word, and deed, in which the 'old Adam' is drowned anew each day, so that a new person, forgiven and restored by Christ's death and resurrection, daily rises and comes forth to live before God in Christ's righteousness and purity forever."

Homosexual behavior, like any sin, can be forgiven. That's quite a different thing, of course, than to say that such behavior is OK.

FOR FURTHER STUDY ...

The Family Ministry unit of the Synod's Board for District and Congregational Services provides a variety of articles, Web links and resources dealing with homosexuality and other issues. To find them, go on the Web to <http://dcs.lcms.org/?s=family>, click on the button labeled "Timely Topics" and look for "homosexuality."

Two resources cited in the article on these pages also are available online. They are:

- **Human Sexuality: A Theological Perspective**, a report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, www.lcms.org/ctcr/docs/sxty-01.html.
 - **A Plan for Ministry to Homosexuals and Their Families**, www.lcms.org/president/pdf/minhomfam.pdf.
- The following resources may also be ordered from Concordia Publishing House at www.cph.org:
- **Love, Sex, and God** — Item Number: 14-2117
 - **Human Sexuality** — Item Number: 14-2119
 - **Report on Human Sexuality** — Item Number: 09-2426
 - **Christian Perspective: Homosexuality** — Item Number: 20-2586
 - **5-Minute Bible Studies: Contemporary Issues** — Item Number: 20-2722
 - **Lifelines of Love** — Item Number: 12-4168



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



THE CHRISTIAN'S STRUGGLE WITH

Sexual Temptation

*“Gay” or “straight,” sin is sin.
But God has not left us to struggle alone.*

by Charles L. Manske

The struggle is difficult for many who take their discipleship to Christ as primary and yet struggle with their sexual identity. Am I a child of Christ, or am I at the whims of my biological and psychological inheritance?

Some Christian homosexuals try to rationalize, “If God created us to be homosexuals, it is not our fault—and it is OK to practice what God has ordained us to be.”

Wrong answer!

Using the same logic, heterosex-

uals also could reason that since we find ourselves enslaved in sin and easy prey to sexual temptation, it must be God’s will for us to continue in our heterosexual sins.

God has created us to live in relationship with *Him*. But we cannot do so because we are caught in our own web of actual and original sin. In our own self-centeredness, we choose sexual and other carnal sins that separate us from God and His family.

Whether we come by our “sexual orientation” by biological inheritance (nature) or environmental

conditioning (nurture)—whether by birth or by choice—homosexual and heterosexual sins alike are wrong before God. Both need the forgiveness that is ours in Jesus Christ. Do not rationalize your sexual sins as being acceptable before the throne of God the Father.

And yet, the picture of Christ in the New Testament is not one of a judge of sexual indiscretions, but of One who has empathy for those who have not met the letter of God’s Law. When Christ meets the woman caught in adultery, He does not admonish her but her accusers. To

the holy men of the community, Christ says, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (John 8:7).

How then should the Christian Church minister in the name of Christ?

Henri Nouwen was a celibate Roman Catholic priest who continually dealt with the temptation of homosexuality. Author of more than 40 books, former teacher at Harvard University, popular speaker, and a servant and advocate for the poor and dispossessed in South America and Canada, he struggled secretly all of his life over his homosexual inclinations.

Nouwen sought counseling from a center that ministered to homosexual men and women. As Philip Yancey describes it in *Soul Survivor* (Doubleday, 2001):

1. “He could remain a celibate priest and ‘come out’ as a gay man, which would at least release the secret he bore in anguish.
2. “He could declare himself, leave the priesthood, and seek a gay companion.
3. “He could remain a priest publicly and develop private gay relationships. Nouwen carefully weighed each course and rejected it. Any public confession of his identity would hurt his ministry, he feared. The last two options seemed impossible for one who had taken a vow of celibacy, and who looked to the Bible and to Rome for guidance on sexual morality.
4. “Instead, he decided to keep living with the wound. Again and again, he decided.”

The four choices are not only before Henri Nouwen. The choices are before those who struggle with sexual temptations but who wish to continue to be disciples of the Savior. What are we to do?

The first answer is to stop trying to justify your sins before God:

- Don’t tell God that your wish to sin is more important than the blueprint for Christian living that we find in the Bible.
- Don’t pretend that your sexual needs are more important than God’s commands.
- Don’t pretend that your need to practice your lust on your sexual preferences is more important than God’s plan of sexual monogamy in Christian marriage.
- Don’t pretend that living with a partner replaces God’s plan for marriage and the nurturing of children within heterosexual marriage.

God knows you inside out. He knows when you are pretending to be something you are not. He knows when you are trying to rewrite the Bible according to your sexual needs. He knows the games you are playing with Him, and He is unhappy with it.

God gave you life. God offers you the plan that assures that you will be living in heaven with Him forever. *Your plan* does not work. Face It. You need to be in *His plan*, or you miss being with Him in heaven ... forever.

The Good News is that God provides an acceptable way for either the homosexual or the heterosexual who is struggling with his or her sexual identity. It is not up to us to turn around our fallen biological inheritance or our environmental conditioning. We could not do it by ourselves anyway, no matter how hard we try. So God provides the only way it can be done — through His Son, Jesus Christ. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

(Read “Searching Scripture,” page 23, for more insights on this topic.)

The Redeemer comes to us as the servant on the cross who died there for all our sins. He comes to us as the triumphant risen Savior who has conquered death and the grave. He forgives us free and

Don’t pretend that living with a partner replaces God’s plan for marriage and the nurturing of children within heterosexual marriage.

clear. Our sexual sins are forgiven once and for all. We are no longer slaves of what we were; but we are what we are — forgiven by our Savior and on our way to His home in heaven forever.

The struggles with sex will continue as long as you live. Whether you are self-centered or Christ-centered will be a struggle as long as life continues here on earth. But you now know who you are and to Whom you belong.

If you are a gay person, God can restore you to be the new person that He created and redeemed you to be. Look to the cross for forgiveness, repent of your past and look to the power of the resurrection through which the Holy Spirit can bring about the miracle of a new birth.

Rejoice in the new identity that you have in Christ. No longer are we slaves to our sexual urges, but we are free to be citizens in our future home in heaven, a home we can begin to experience here on earth. For the kingdom of God begins in this life and continues forever.



Dr. Charles L. Manske is executive producer of the Synod's satellite-television program “Point of Truth” and was the founding president of Concordia University, Irvine, Calif.



THE JUDGE AND YES.

by John W. Tape

A 2.6-ton monument to the Ten Commandments no longer dominates the rotunda of the Alabama Judicial Building in Montgomery. In late August, it was moved out of public view.

Nearly a year before it was moved, a federal judge had ruled that the monument violated the First Amendment's prohibition of government-established religion and ordered its removal. But it did not go without a fight.

Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, who placed the monument in the building two years ago, defied the federal court order to remove it—and was suspended as a result by the Alabama Judicial Inquiry Commission. Some well-known Christian personalities decried the court order, saying it was another attempt to remove God from public life. Protestors held prayer vigils.

The American public apparently didn't like the court order, either. A recent "Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing" reported that 77 percent of Americans disapprove of the order to remove the monument.

Still, even Christians are not unanimous in their support for Judge Moore and his monument. As a contribution to the discussion, *The Lutheran Witness* offers here two Lutheran perspectives on the matter.

On the east pediment of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C., there is a relief of Moses holding the Ten Commandments. Why hasn't the Supreme Court demanded its removal? Aren't they establishing a religion? Isn't that a confusion of church and state?

Not at all. Our judicial system is based upon natural law, and this natural law is most clearly reflected in the Ten Commandments. Martin Luther writes, "Why does one then keep and teach the Ten Commandments? Answer: Because the natural laws were never so orderly and well written as by Moses."

Since the Ten Commandments are an accurate representation of natural law—the natural law on which our legal system is founded—it is right and proper that they be displayed in public, especially in courthouses, state capital buildings and other legal settings. Chief Justice Roy Moore was correct to display them at the Alabama Judicial Building in Montgomery.

Isn't displaying the Ten Commandments on government property establishing, or at least supporting, religion, and therefore contrary to the First Amendment to the United States constitution? Not at all. Which religion does the Ten Commandments establish? Christianity or Judaism? There is no such thing as the "Judeo-Christian religion." The two religions of Christianity and Judaism are as far

apart as light is from darkness. Yet, the two religions do have in common a great respect for natural law. Thus they both appreciate the Ten Commandments.

Yet, not everyone in our country today knows the natural law.

It was much the same in Luther's day. He writes, "The trouble is, everyone likes to think that the natural law is encased in his head. ... If the natural law and reason were inherent in all heads that resemble human heads, then fools, and children ... would be just as capable of ruling and waging war as David, Augustus, and Hannibal. ... Therefore it is also a fact that among those who presume to have natural reason or natural law, and boast of it, there are very great and efficient natural fools. The noble gem called natural law and reason is a rare thing among the children of men."

Thus it is important for the church and the state to publicly promote the Ten Commandments. Such promotion does not establish any specific religion, but it does remind people of the moral and legal foundation on which this country stands.

Since natural law is not readily known, some seek to establish their own ideas of right and wrong as the law of the land. They want to remove God's natural, absolute moral values from our laws and erase them from our children's textbooks. In this way they justify abortion, normalize homosexuality, and rip apart the moral fabric of our society.

Yes, we are citizens of a higher country. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are members of His kingdom of Grace. However, we are also citizens of an earthly kingdom, which

continued on page 22

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Should Lutherans support Chief Justice Roy Moore in his battle to keep a monument to the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building?



No.

by David L. Adams

Judge Roy Moore is right about a lot of things. He is right to be concerned about the moral chaos of contemporary American society, to decry the growing effort to expel all religious discourse from the arena of public debate, and to remind us of the role of Christianity in the development of the American legal system. But despite being right about all these things, his actions in this instance are legally, historically and theologically wrong.

Legally, Judge Moore is wrong because his position violates the First Amendment. In 1995, when Moore was attacked by civil libertarians for placing a small hand-carved plaque of the Ten Commandments on the wall of his courtroom, I thought Moore was right because the First Amendment guarantees the freedom of religious expression. But the 5,300-pound, carved stone monument representing the Ten Commandments that Moore placed in the rotunda of the state's Judicial Building is a different matter.

A hand-carved plaque placed in one's place of work can reasonably be defended as a personal expression of religious faith; a two-and-a-half ton monument placed in the lobby of a public building cannot.

Nor does Moore claim that defense. He claims that the purpose of his monument is to restore the nation to God. This promotion of an admittedly religious motive by a civil official violates the First Amendment's prohibition against the government's favoring one religion over another. The Constitution does not prohibit civil officials from having and expressing religious views; it does prohibit them from using their office to force those views upon others.

Judge Moore bases his defense primarily on the historical claim that American law has its moral roots in the Ten Commandments. That claim is partially true.

But American law recognizes "We the people" as the source of our laws. The Judeo-Christian tradition is only one of many legal traditions that have come together to shape American law. That is why the courtroom of the U.S. Supreme Court contains images of the many great lawgivers who have contributed to

the development of civil law, among them Hammurabi and Moses. Judge Moore's claim that the Ten Commandments *alone* are the basis of American law is simply wrong.

Finally, Judge Moore's position reflects a fundamental theological error. The Bible teaches that God is at work in the world through civil government to preserve life and to promote order, justice and peace in society. God is also at work in the world through the Church to make disciples for Christ. God would have each of these realms respect and support, but not interfere with or supplant, the other.

Judge Moore confuses his duty as a civil official with his duty as a Christian. When urged by the other eight members of the Alabama Supreme Court and the state's attorney general to remove his monument, Moore declared, "I will never, never deny the God upon whom our laws and country depend."

But no one has ever asked that Judge Moore deny God, or even cease to believe in the Ten Commandments. They have only told him that he must conduct himself as a civil official in accordance with the civil law. When Judge Moore took his

continued on page 22

we love very much. Today, America is in the midst of a great cultural revolution. Nothing less than the future of our beloved nation is at stake. Will our country remain firmly anchored to the absolute moral values of God's natural law? Or will we be cut adrift to crash upon the shoals of political correctness and moral subjectivity?

The tide is rising and the current is swift. Now is the time for all who love our country to defend the moral foundation on which it stands.

The physical rule of God through the secular government and His spiritual rule through the Church must never be confused; however, any application of this two-kingdoms doctrine that encourages Christians to sit idly by while the moral foundation of our country is being destroyed is most certainly wrong.



Dr. John Tape is founder of the Christian Media Literacy Institute, a Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

oath of office, he swore to protect and defend that civil law. He has the right of every citizen to work to change the laws that he disagrees with, but until they are changed, he must either uphold them or, if his Christian faith prevents him from upholding them, resign from public office.

As much as I sympathize with Judge Moore's concerns about the direction of American society, he has adopted the wrong cure. Placing a monument to the Ten Commandments in the Alabama Judicial Building will not make America a safer, more just, or more decent place to live. If anything, his confusion over public and private religious expressions threatens to give support to the very forces that Judge Moore should fear the most—those who would expel all religious discourse from American public life.



Dr. David L. Adams is associate professor of exegetical theology and director of educational technology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and was director of the Synod's now-closed Office of Government Information.

FAMILY *Counselor*

I was very upset by something my pastor covered in his sermon. I lost my temper and spoke to him about it. Since then I have tried to talk with him but haven't felt that our relationship has been the same. I want to clear this up and remain active in the church, but I'm not sure of the most appropriate way to handle the situation. Can you help?

Your question is difficult to answer without important details about the sermon and the nature of your comments. Important aspects to consider include whether you were concerned about a doctrinal aspect of the sermon; an interpretation of Scripture; a personal opinion he expressed; or the nature and context of your initial approach to him (In his office? In front of others?). The answers will help shape your response.

Having said that, I would

encourage you first to write a note of apology to your pastor for losing your temper, acknowledging that you also share responsibility for any misunderstanding and conflict. Such admission, and your request for his forgiveness, expresses your desire to restore the relationship.

Then, ask to meet with him one-on-one, preferably in a public place that has a relaxed atmosphere, such as a restaurant. Tell him that, at this meeting, you would like him to clarify the issues that upset you. You might wait until after the meal before you address your concerns, perhaps beginning with a prayer that sets the tone for mutual respect and forgiveness. Make it clear to him that you regret any damage to mutual trust the "incident" may have caused.

In a clear, honest and respectful way, ask him to help you understand the comments that concern you. It could well be that what you

"heard" him say is not at all what he wanted to communicate. Explain why you believe the way you do, using the Scriptures and other sources you feel support your opinion. If the issue is not a doctrinal one, you might very well agree to disagree and still respect each other's viewpoint. If there are unresolved doctrinal concerns, discuss your differences with a third party—perhaps a trusted elder, or the circuit counselor.

Jesus taught—and showed—that a forgiving spirit is at the heart of what it means to follow Him. The more Christlike virtues you and your pastor possess, the greater the likelihood of reconciliation.



Dr. Randy Schroeder is assistant professor in the Pastoral Ministry and Missions Department at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

JESUS, OUR MEDIATOR

by Andrew J. Simcak Jr.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ... (1 Tim. 2:5).

What does it mean that Jesus is our “mediator”?

The answer to this question is basic to the understanding of our faith in Jesus, the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins, and the certainty that eternal salvation has been secured for us.

My dictionary defines mediation as “the interventions between conflicting parties to promote reconciliation.” You may be familiar with the use of a mediator to resolve disputes in business and politics. Perhaps you have served as a mediator to reconcile two parties at odds with one another. Certainly, parents have mediated sibling battles over toys.

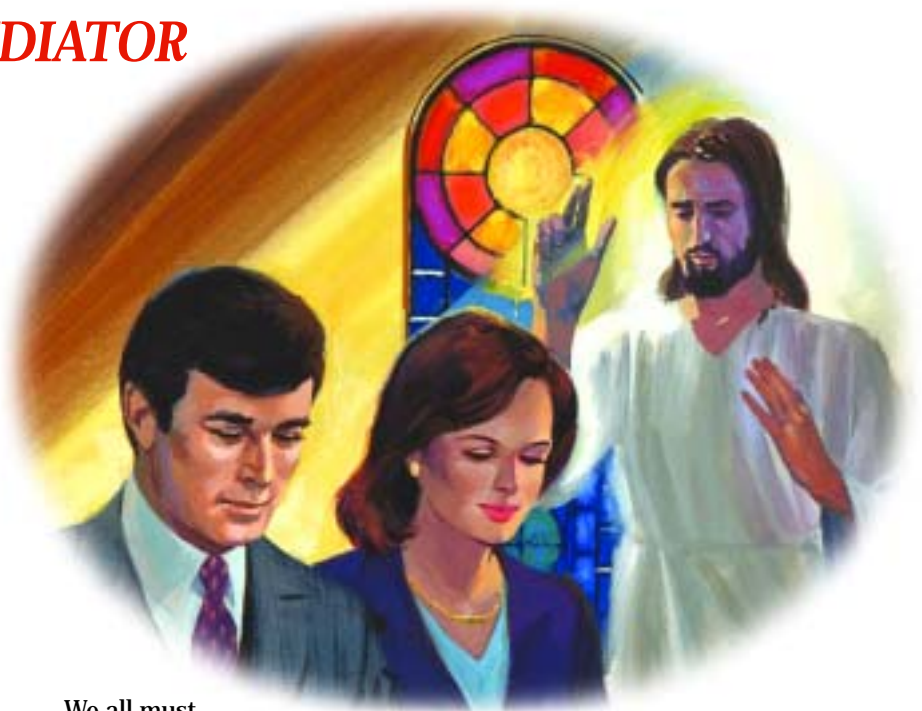
By nature, we have been “at odds” with God—we have been His enemy, in fact, and condemned as a result—from the day of our *conception*. Why? Consult Ps. 51:5 for the answer.

Look up the following passages. What does each say about the kinds of sins we sinners commit?

Ps. 90:8 _____

Rom. 8:26 _____

Rom. 7:14–15 _____



We all must confess to God that “we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against [Him] in thought, word, and deed.” But what is God’s standard for how we are to live our lives? Read 1 Peter 1:13–15. _____

What have our sins accomplished? Look up Is. 59:2.

We need someone to mediate between God and us. Thank God that because of His undeserved love for us—His saving grace—He provided a Mediator, His only Son, who by His suffering, death and resurrection has reconciled us to His Father!

What has Jesus accomplished for us through His life, death and resurrection? Read John 1:29 and 1 John 1:7. _____

Because of what Jesus has done for us, we are no longer separated from God due to our sin. This act of undeserved and unmerited love

is the Good News proclaimed in 2 Cor. 5:19 and in Eph. 1:7.

Look again at 1 Tim. 2:5, which opened this study. Where else besides in Jesus can we find a mediator between us and God the Father? _____

Through the Gospel, God proclaims and offers us what Jesus, our only Mediator, has done for us. God gives us the faith to believe that Jesus died and rose for us.

Only because of our Mediator have we, by faith, been reconciled to God. We are no longer in conflict with God and His Law. We have been made His perfect sons and daughters. Consult Rom. 8:31 and 38–39. What comfort and assurance this provides for our daily life.



Rev. Andrew J. Simcak Jr. is vacancy pastor at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Houston, Texas.

PASTORS' FAMILIES

The day before this column was written, my wife, Terry, and I returned from a 16-day trip to South America. The primary purpose of the trip was a meeting of the presidents and bishops of some 30 confessional Lutheran churches from around the world who are members of the International Lutheran Council. Through a special grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries, the spouses of these church leaders also were able to attend.

Four special aspects of our lives together as Lutheran Christians were highlighted on our trip to South America—pastors' families, partner churches, mission fields and Lutheran schools. I will focus this month's column on pastors' families, saving the other three topics for future articles.

The theme of the conference, held in Foz do Iguacu, Brazil, was "Building Healthy Pastors' Families," which was presented in a context of in-depth Bible study by Dr. David and Mrs. Kathy Ludwig, life-long LCMS members. The presentations focused on the four pillars of a healthy marriage: intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical.

Those in attendance agreed to the critical importance of healthy pastors' families for a healthy Christian church. Specific ideas generated by participants include these:

- The personal family life of the pastor is part of his ministry. The family should not be in competition with, but a partner in, ministry.
- The pastor and his family must deliberately work on making family time a priority.
- The pastor and his family can model confession by being sensibly open with their struggles, allowing the perception of humanness rather than perfection, thus modeling the power of the Gospel in their lives.

- The members of the pastor's family can see one another as a gift, learning to listen carefully to each other and to value the blessings each person brings to the family.
- The pastor and his family should be encouraged to work toward open, in-depth communication, working on problems together, not letting the "sun go down" on unsettled differences.
- The pastor and his family should be encouraged to spend more time with Christ, asking God's Holy Spirit for that change of heart that brings forth the new self.

Specific plans that were encouraged for the years ahead include:

- Sharing with the church-at-large ideas gained at this conference.
- Focusing attention and resources on the importance of healthy pastors' families.
- Encouraging pastors and their spouses to spend quality, intentional time together.
- Balancing congregational expectations of the pastor with the need for the pastor's family to be a part of his life and ministry.
- Developing and publicizing a network of Christian counselors to assist pastors' families in times of need.
- Developing and conducting seminars and retreats for pastoral couples, including some specifically for district presidents and their wives, with the possibility of continuing-education credits.
- Developing networks of pastors' families that support each other, including prayer support.
- Developing plans for appropriate pastoral compensation and responsible money management.

In the LCMS, a number of resources for pastors' families exist:

- The Worker Benefit Plans provide confidential counseling services



for all enrollees, including pastors, educators and all other congregational employees covered by the plan, through Value Options. Their toll-free number is (800) 428-0957. Details are available through the Worker Benefit Plans office.

- Retreats and seminars are conducted in various places around the Synod, including those sponsored by the districts of the LCMS. Several districts hold annual pastors' wives retreats, marriage enrichment seminars, etc. Other entities, such as Grace Place, for example, hold retreats for pastors and their spouses, often at little or no cost to the pastor's family.
- The LCMS Commission on Ministerial Growth and Support provides resources for pastors and educators of the Synod. Additional financial resources are needed for this important work in our midst.

It is important to remember that many of the ideas and plans in this article apply also to other church workers, including educators, deaconesses, directors of Christian education, etc. Thanks to all of you, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for your support of these valued and valuable servants of Christ and His church among us.

Jerry Kieschnick

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

John 3:16–17

e-mail: president@lcms.org

Web page: www.lcms.org/president