

The Lutheran
WITNESS
OCTOBER 2004 VOL. 123 NO. 9

Bush, Kerry

and the **Christian Voter** 





The Lutheran WITNESS

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

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The convention and marriage

Does convention action mean that we should become active in pushing for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution on defining marriage?

*David Furholmen
Roselle, Ill.*

I READ WITH INTEREST YOUR REPORT ON the LCMS convention (“One Mission—Ablaze! ... to the Ends of the Earth,” Aug. ’04). A lot of good information on such an important event.

I have a concern based on the “nearly unanimous vote (1,163 to 22)” on the Biblical marriage issue. There must have been 22 voting delegates who are not members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod!

*Robert T. Mesenbring
Grand Marais, Minn.*

THE AUGUST *LUTHERAN WITNESS* reported that President Kieschnick has encouraged district presidents to support a Federal Marriage Amendment. This is a well-meaning but misguided proposal for several reasons. One is that marriage is not the business of the federal government under the U.S. Constitution. Marriage laws are, and always have been, a state matter.

Also, how can Bible-believing Christians be certain that an amendment drafted by a secular government would faithfully follow Christian principles? In fact, one version of an amendment already proposed would allow states to establish civil unions for same-sex couples! This change was made to secure more votes. Imagine if this wording were in the final amendment.

The most effective way to protect the sanctity of marriage without giving the federal government more power is for Congress to use its authority under the Constitution to limit the jurisdiction of the federal courts. This would solve many problems caused by anti-Christian feder-

al-court decisions, including those regarding marriage.

*Byron Kern
Richardson, Texas*

Creation

I’M SO PLEASED TO HEAR THAT THE issue of teaching special creation throughout our Synod was discussed at the convention! I can’t tell you how important it was for me to receive not just teaching, but tools to refute evolutionary hypotheses when my faith was challenged and attacked in public high school and college. I received most of this material from a ministry called Answers in Genesis. I encourage teachers, professors, pastors, missionaries and lay leaders to educate themselves about materials from this organization (on the Web at www.answersingenesis.org). AiG makes the point that the Biblical creation account is a necessary element of spreading the Good News about Jesus Christ. After all, He is not only our Brother and Redeemer, but, indeed, our Creator!

*Alisa Rabe
Lincoln, NE*

Not ‘computerized’

YOUR ARTICLE ON THE SYNOD CONVENTION concludes that for more information, one should go to a computer address, www.lcms.org/convention. Have you forgotten that there are, believe it or not, readers who are *not* “computerized”? I value the printed word on paper, not on a computer screen.

I look forward to the convention news in *The Lutheran Witness*.

*Ron Bohn
Rochester, N.Y.*

The August issue of The Lutheran Witness devoted about the same space to the convention as post-convention issues in previous years. We aren’t providing less news on paper than in the past, but the Web allows us to provide even more news to those with Internet access. That includes many who may not own a computer or have Internet access at home, but who can access the Web on computers at their local public libraries. —Ed.

A baker’s dozen

THANKS MUCH FOR YOUR COVERAGE OF the 62nd Regular Convention of the Synod, providing a succinct yet comprehensive summary of major events and decisions. The only correction I would gently offer (with tongue in cheek) relates to the statement about numerous delegates lined up at 12 microphones to speak about a matter of importance. Actually, there were 13 microphones. I know. I counted them. Often.

*Dr. Jerry Kieschnick
St. Louis, Mo.*

President Kieschnick chaired the convention. —Ed.

Even if it’s fiction

A LETTER IN THE AUGUST ISSUE REGARDING “The Truth about *The DaVinci Code*” stated, “I do not consider anything I buy from the fiction section of my local bookstore to be anything but fiction.” I agree, and that is how I read books. But not everyone reads books in such a manner.

After *The DaVinci Code* became popular, a local ELCA congregation had a professor from Luther Seminary near here give a presentation on the errors found in the book. Afterward, a local TV station inter-

viewed a number of attendees. One gave her occupation as a nurse, then went on to say she liked the idea of Jesus being married—so no matter what a seminary professor or anyone else had to say on the matter, after reading *The DaVinci Code* she would forever believe Jesus was married.

*Kathy Johnson
Richfield, Minn.*

What we teach

THE “Q&A” QUESTION FOR MAY—ABOUT what is taught in confirmation classes—is one I have asked also. We lived in Florida for six years, and I was amazed at the lack of knowledge shown by people from all over the United States. There seemed to be very little understanding, for example, that there is a difference between the LCMS and the ELCA. In fact, there was a great deal of transferring from one synod to the other.

My wife and I sat through a confirmation class with a number of other adults. After several weeks, one of the ladies asked the pastor, “Is that all you give these kids?”

I was asked by our pastor to conduct a class for adults. I could choose the topics. I chose to show the differences among different churches, including among Lutheran churches. I learned a lot. I did not know that there are as many different Lutheran synods as there are, although some are very small.

It seems to me that we have gotten away from really teaching confirmands what the church stands for. We certainly are not letting them know that there are differences and what those differences are. Teaching the catechism and requiring memorization may not have been the best way to get this information across, but it certainly was better than what we have substituted for it.

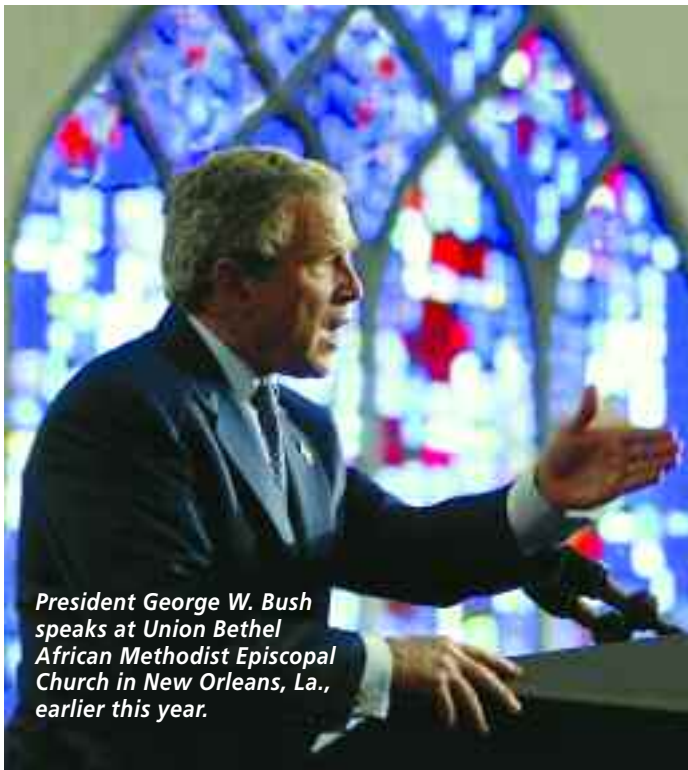
*Andrew R. Stenson
Oconomowoc, Wis.*

BUSH, KERRY AND THE CHRISTIAN VOTER

Political choices from a Christian perspective may be more complex than they sometimes might seem.

BY JEFF WALZ AND JAMES BURKEE

In an effort to promote Christian citizenship, two professors from Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, have been visiting churches to discuss from a Christian perspective this year's two major-party presidential candidates. Their intent is not to endorse either candidate, but to encourage thought and discussion about how we practice our Christian vocation in the civic realm through God's gift of government. Their article has that same goal in mind. — Ed.



President George W. Bush speaks at Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in New Orleans, La., earlier this year.

In early May, President George W. Bush visited Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW) to give a commencement speech and receive an honorary doctorate. His visit may suggest to some people an affinity between Missouri Synod Lutherans and the president.

Yet, for Lutherans, the choice this November may not be as clear as it first appears.

Bush, raised Episcopalian, characterizes himself as a “born again” Methodist who came to faith in the depths of a personal crisis in his career and a battle with alcohol. In a debate with Democratic nominee Al Gore four years ago, Bush surprised observers by choosing Jesus Christ as his favorite political philosopher.

Asked to elaborate, Bush continued, “It’s going to be hard to explain. When you turn your heart and your life over to Christ, when you accept Christ as the Savior, it changes your heart. It changes your life. And that’s what happened to me.”

Bush’s response alienated some voters but endeared him to many evangelical Christians. In his first term, Bush has been very public about his allegiance to a “higher father” and his conclusion, in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, that he has been called by God to be president.

Kerry, conversely, has been much less willing to wear his faith on his sleeve. Raised Roman Catholic, Kerry became an agnostic following his experience as a Swift Boat commander during the Vietnam War. Now an active Catholic, Kerry has come under fire from some bishops for not supporting official church positions—particularly the church’s opposition to abortion.

Yet he finds support elsewhere in the church in his approach to social justice, poverty and opposition to the war in Iraq. John Kerry is the first major Roman Catholic presidential candidate since John F. Kennedy in 1960, and only the third in American history (Al Smith was trounced by Herbert Hoover in 1928).

In December 2002, President Bush signed an execu-

tive order fulfilling a major campaign promise, his Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI). Through FBCI, Bush said he hoped to use federal funds to empower religious organizations to “better meet social needs in America’s communities,” according to a White House press release.

For some conservative Christians, however, Bush’s program threatens to cross the barrier separating church and state in America. Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition, has expressed opposition to FBCI, saying he fears that government regulation of religious charities will dilute their religious message. Even the 2001 LCMS convention could encourage only “cautious participation” in the program, unsurprising given the church’s historic resistance to state interference.

Kerry, meanwhile, has been highly critical both of Bush’s faith-based programs and the practice of his faith.

“We have a separation of church and state in this country,” Kerry said. “As John Kennedy said very clearly, I will be a president who happens to be Catholic, not a Catholic president.”

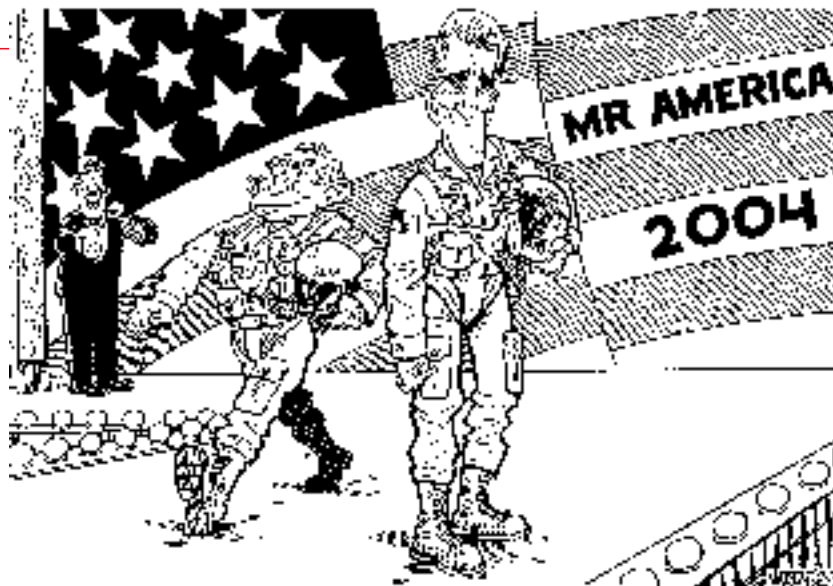
On March 7, Kerry went further, suggesting that Bush’s policies do not reflect his personal faith. Quoting James 2:14, Kerry asked, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?” He continued, “When we look at what is happening in America today, where are the works of compassion?”

Bush’s campaign spokesman responded that Kerry’s comment “was beyond the bounds of acceptable discourse and a sad exploitation of Scripture for a political attack.”

Also troubling to some Lutherans is Bush’s conflicted message on Christian exceptionalism.

During his 1994 campaign for Texas governor, Bush was criticized by Jewish groups for suggesting that “only Christians have a place in heaven.” He later backed off, saying that “judgments about heaven do not belong in the realm of politics or this world; they belong to a higher authority” and affirming his “respect for individuals from all faiths, all backgrounds and all walks of life.”

More recently, he drew fire from evangelicals for



“ROUND ONE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE JUMPSUIT COMPETITION!”

stating that Christians and Muslims “worship the same Almighty.” Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, retorted that Bush was “simply mistaken” and is “commander in chief, not theologian in chief.”

In the arena of domestic policy, there also has been considerable difference over how the Christian citizen

best applies Christ’s mandate to give to the poor (Matt. 19:21; Mark 10:21). Here President Bush has consistently come under attack from Kerry and liberal Christian organizations like the National Council of Churches (NCC), particularly for a tax cut it considers too large and inequitable.

In a 2001 release, “Religious Community for Responsible Tax Policy,” the NCC expressed dismay that millions of Americans living in poverty, “parents and children, the elderly, people with disabilities and the working poor—are driven to seek charity to meet their



Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. John Kerry, speaks during a Sunday service earlier this year at Greater Bethlehem Temple Apostolic Faith Church in Jackson, Miss.



For every believer who finds John Kerry's support for public spending on welfare and health care a more Biblical approach to the poor, another finds Scriptural support for George Bush's call for compassion and individual responsibility.

most basic needs." It called on the president to restructure the tax cuts so that the poorest households benefit.

Kerry argues that government should be allowed to help people who cannot help themselves, and vows to raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans (households with incomes over \$200,000) in his first 100 days in office. Kerry also pledges a new age of government activism in areas like health care, where he promises that "he will give every American access to the health care plan that the president and members of Congress already have."

Bush responds with an alternative view of government's purpose.

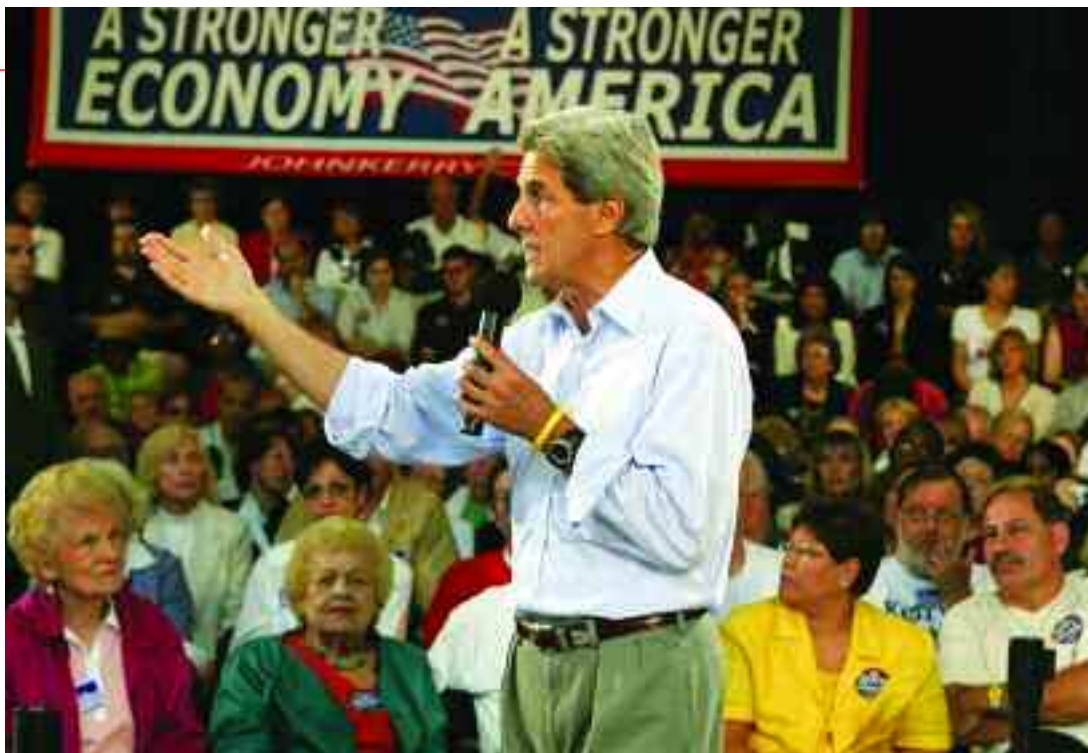
"Government can play many important roles," the president told CUW graduates in May, "but it cannot take someone's hand and be their friend." Calling on graduates to help build a more compassionate America (what he calls his "responsibility society"), President Bush argued that "true fulfillment" is found not in government activism but "with the responsibilities we assume: to care for our families, and to love a neighbor as we want to be loved ourselves."

The two candidates also hold competing views of another subject of interest to Christians, government's role in our stewardship of the environment. As Texas governor, Bush pursued voluntary measures to encourage a cleaner environment, a strategy he has largely followed as president. Kerry, conversely, would like to see government play a more active role in cleaning up and maintaining the environment. Bush supports drilling for oil and gas on public lands, including Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, an approach Kerry opposes.



The entry of conservative Christians into politics perhaps can be traced to the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling in *Roe v. Wade*. In 2000, more than 70 percent of voters who believed abortion should be "always" or "mostly" illegal voted for George Bush, while about 65 percent of those who believed abortion should be "always" or "mostly" legal voted for Al Gore.

Kerry, who contends that he is personally opposed to abortion, has consistently voted in the Senate against any restriction on abortion. He recently told an abortion-rights rally, "Abortion should be rare, but it should be safe and legal, and the government should stay out of the bedroom." He has pledged, moreover, to nominate only pro-choice judges for the Supreme Court.



May, he told Concordia graduates "that every life matters, that no insignificant person was ever born."

Bush also has expressed support for a constitutional amendment to define marriage as between only a man and a woman.

For many individual Christians, the choice in November seems crystal clear. Yet it is important to acknowledge that Christians are not of one mind politically and, historically, have not been.

For every believer who finds John Kerry's support for public spending on welfare and health care a more Biblical approach to the poor, for example, another finds Scriptural support for George Bush's call for compassion and individual responsibility. Christians also have differed on the appropriate relationship between church and state, and on the issue that may very well decide the 2004 election—the war in Iraq. (Kerry supported a Senate resolution authorizing the president to go to war in Iraq, but has criticized Bush's handling of the war.)

May Lutherans acknowledge their responsibility as Christian citizens to participate in our American democracy's political life—thoughtfully, prayerfully and in accordance with what they believe to be God's will.



At the same time, Kerry has drawn on the recent death of Ronald Reagan to argue for lifting government restrictions on stem-cell research, which he argues could potentially lead to cures or treatments for sicknesses like Alzheimer's disease.

Finally, Kerry favors civil unions for gays and lesbians and opposes state and federal constitutional amendments to ban gay "marriage" (although he now suggests he might support a limited ban).

President Bush, meanwhile, supported the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 and the 2004 Unborn Victims of Violence Act (which Kerry voted against). In



Concordia University Wisconsin historian Dr. James Burkee, left, and political scientist Dr. Jeff Walz study the connection between faith and politics, historically and today.

THE WORLD COMES TO SLIPPERY ROCK

You don't have to travel overseas to do international mission work.

BY AUGUSTA R. MENNELL

All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center (ASLC) in Slippery Rock, Pa., is definitely in the “boondocks”—one hour north of Pittsburgh and two hours from Cleveland. Why would God locate an international mission field here? That’s what He has done. He has sent the mission field to us in the form of international students who attend Slippery Rock University (SRU).

Students from South Korea, China, Mongolia, Ukraine and many nations come to study at SRU. And many of them come to ASLC to improve their English, gain a clearer understanding of life in America, find friendship and attend one-on-one Bible classes scheduled at their convenience.



Erdene Nyamjav, a student from Mongolia, was baptized at All Saints Lutheran Church on May 2, 2004, by pastor Rev. Michael D. Scheer.

Reaching Mongolia from Slippery Rock

People in Mongolia, as recently described in *National Geographic*, struggle with bitter cold and little money. In the cities, daily survival is an effort, and the old ways are disappearing.

Erdene “Eric” Nyamjav came from Mongolia to Slippery Rock to study for one year. He had taught himself English in just two years by watching television in Mongolia, which also gave him an amazingly good introduction to Christianity.

His parents are not Christian, but Eric told a group of American students that he is a Christian. They asked him which denomination he belongs to. Eric knew nothing about denominations. Yet, here he was, coming to weekly Bible study at All Saints Lutheran Church because he is so interested in learning more.

He has a Christian “Friendship Family” from the area. This family welcomed him to their home for meals and invited him to their church.

When Eric returned to Mongolia, he took with him an English Bible, a Russian Bible and books published by the Lutheran Heritage Foundation (LHF). Eric wants to tell others in Mongolia what it means to be a Christian.



Maryna Trofymchenko, an international student from Ukraine attending Slippery Rock University, cheerfully visits people in a nursing home with the author earlier this year.



Churl-soon returned to South Korea this summer, but is now back at Slippery Rock University to study international business and at All Saints Student Center to continue his Bible studies.

Truly international

Maryna Trofymchenko is from Ukraine. She is a Christian who attended church with her family and is familiar with the Bible. But she too wanted to learn more.

At first she came to our Friday Bible class, but other commitments prevented that. So she attended a one-on-one class on Tuesday mornings where she and I studied *Lutheran Catechesis* by Rev. Peter Bender. This individual study was more comfortable for her because there is no pressure about making mistakes when speaking English or not being familiar with some Bible information.

Churl-soon is a graduate student who returned to Slippery Rock after some years of work at home in South Korea. He stepped through the doors of All Saints as if he had never been away. What a wonderful surprise it was to see him again. Best of all, what a blessing it is to see that he wants to grow in his faith. He sometimes comes to the Friday group class and other times to an individual study. Churl-soon is like a sponge soaking in God's Word to apply to his daily life.

Ying Yang, a student from China, accepted my invitation to come to All Saints Student Center to improve her English through conversation and to learn more about the Bible. She seems absolutely delighted to have a copy of a Chinese-English New Testament and *101 Favorite Stories from the Bible* in Chinese.

Ying's husband, Yunfeng Shi, is a recent Christian convert. Ying knows he has a different perspective on life since he became a follower of Jesus Christ. Ying is interested in learning more about her husband's new faith. ASLC was able to give them a *Concordia Self-Study Bible*, which they appreciate because of its explanatory footnotes. They will take this Bible with them when they return to China.



Ying Yang, left, goes to the All Saints Student Center to improve her English and to learn about Christianity. Yunfeng Shi, her husband, recently became a Christian.

STARTING THE MINISTRY AT SLIPPERY ROCK

In 1984, Jim Mennell realized that the people of All Saints Lutheran Church had an opportunity to reach out to the international students just across the street on the campus of Slippery Rock University. He asked Aaron Cornelio, a student from Angola, Africa, who attended All Saints, to invite other international students to a Friday evening Bible fellowship.



Jim and Augusta Mennell

Rev. Bob Weinhold taught the class, helped by Jim and Augusta Mennell. Gradually, a campus ministry developed when they began to deal with the personal needs of these students.

In 1992, Dr. Roger Pittelko, then president of the English District, appointed Augusta the campus ministry director at All Saints. In the 20 years of the ministry, Augusta has had contact with more than 800 students, and close contact with about 400 students.

‘Do you remember me?’

“Hi, Mrs. Mennell,” the Christmas letter began, “This is Lawrence from Hong Kong. Do you remember me?”

Of course I remembered Lawrence. He came to All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center about 10 years ago. He came looking for help finding a desk. We drove all over the area, going to several thrift shops,

Last year, a former international student enclosed a check with his Christmas greeting, saying, “Use the money I have enclosed to buy some Bibles for students. I am glad to give it up to you.”

searching for an inexpensive desk. I was worried that we wouldn’t get one; but Lawrence said to me, “Don’t worry, Mrs. Mennell. Just have faith.”

His faith stunned me! He had learned of Christ from the little Gideon Bible given to him. And he was quite right. We walked into one Salvation Army thrift store just as someone was donating a desk—the desk that Lawrence then used at Slippery Rock University.

Lawrence recently called to tell the members of All Saints that he still appreciates the care shown to him and to tell us that he is returning to Hong Kong to be with his mother. He said he built a successful business and sold it, and had married a woman he met at church. I could never have guessed that this international student would become a strong Christian.

That is one of the thrills of being a missionary to international students who study at the universities in America: We never know where faith will grow.

Christmas cards, letters and phone calls from former students reveal that Lawrence’s story is not unusual. Evangelism work to more than 600,000 international students attending American universities produces dazzling fruits—amazing proof that God is keeping His promise to not let the Word return void, but be fruitful.

A graduate student’s parents wrote from Bulgaria saying, “To our deep regret, for a long time our country existed without God. Our daughter was a child of this period. You nurtured her to overcome her feelings.”



Madeliene Atzeva, a student from Bulgaria, holds the Trimline Bible she uses to witness to friends. She has recently moved to St. Louis to continue her education and is staying with Rev. and Mrs. Wayne Lawrence of St. James Lutheran Church, University City, Mo.

YOU CAN REACH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This family is grateful, and so am I—grateful that God led this daughter to take part in a weekly study of the catechism so she can thoroughly understand her Christian faith.

Jin from South Korea sent a Christmas note saying, “I am in a hard situation now. Please pray for me. People are not as kind as those in Slippery Rock.”

Jin came to Slippery Rock as a strong Christian. Her father is a pastor in Korea. She is painfully shy,

Slippery Rock University students from around the world gather at All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center on Aug. 29 for a “welcome meal.”

exceedingly hard working and very short of financial means. So she appreciated the ASLC “friendship family” who gave her a place to live for a semester. She feels a deep bond with ASLC and still turns here for prayer.

Stefan also sent greetings. Even though it is difficult to make a living in Slovakia, he and his wife continue to trust God and enjoy the “little books”—the *Portals of Prayer*—we send them. His son is baptized and has godparents here at ASLC.

Shiela and Ryme, students from Macau, became very close to their All Saints “friendship family.” But they never indicated that God’s Word was important to them. Satoru Nagaoka, a Japanese student who had become a Christian, kept sharing the Gospel with them, but they didn’t seem open. Imagine my thrill at opening the Christmas card and seeing a photo of them at their Baptism last May as well as the photo of their son, born in November.

We don’t need to travel thousands of miles to be missionaries or even to learn a new language. On campuses all over the United States, young people are coming from every nation.

All we need to do is to invite them into our hearts and homes. Many will accept this invitation. God will do the rest.



Augusta R. Mennell is director of campus ministry for All Saints Lutheran Church and Student Center at Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, Pa.



If current trends continue, some 70 percent of the 720,000 foreign students now studying at U.S. colleges and universities will never set foot in an American home the entire time they’re in this country, according to Rev. Carl Selle.

Why? No one invites them.

That’s a terrible shame, says Selle, especially when you consider that nine of every 10 international students are not Christian, and the vast majority—more than 75 percent, he

says—return to their home countries after graduation.

“The significance of one international student becoming a disciple of Jesus is immense,” says Selle, because that student “returns to many non-Christians with the new excitement and fervor to share the faith.”

Selle is counselor for international student ministry at the

University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, and director of International Student Ministry (ISM), Inc., a mission society that fosters Christian outreach among international students and their families.

“When international students come to the U.S. for study, we are blessed with a brief opportunity to touch their lives with the love of Jesus,” he says. “They are often inquisitive about the Christian faith and may have other needs where Christians can be a blessing—every opportunity gives us a chance to witness clearly.”

ISM, Inc. offers resources to help Christians share the Gospel with international students, including:

- * *The Doorstep*, a bi-monthly newsletter with news, feature stories and prayer requests;
- * ideas for mission events and festivals to increase awareness about international-student ministries;
- * training conferences for those who work with international students on U.S. campuses;
- * speakers for worship, children’s chapel services and workshops; and
- * a Web site that offers information and assistance on topics, such as starting “friendship ministries,” leading Bible studies, finding and meeting international students, hosting an international event and organizing a “host family” program.

For more information, visit the ISM, Inc., Web site at www.isminc.org or call (715) 677-4877.

—Paula Schlueter Ross



Scientists continually search for the origin of life and of the universe. Discoveries in genetics, biochemistry, astronomy and astrophysics have been multiplying at an astounding rate. But the question “Where did life and the universe come from?” remains unanswered by science.

For those of us who believe in God, however, the answer is clear. We believe what Holy Scripture tells us: “God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1).

Science will continue to search for its own answers through empirical research. And new scientific discoveries will continue to be the topic of everyday conversations. This two-part “Searching Scripture” will help you give a witness in such discussions.

God created out of nothing

The first four words of the Bible, “In the beginning God ...,” state a profound truth that is often overlooked. Before anything else existed, God existed. There was no universe in the beginning. But God was there. There were no stars, no planets, no heavens, no earth, no other living being. There was only God. God is without beginning or end.

How is this truth expressed in the following passages? What words would you use to tell a friend what each means to you?

Ex. 3:13–14 _____

Neh. 9:5 _____

Job 36:26 _____

Ps. 90:2 _____

Ps. 93:2 _____

Is. 40:28 _____

1 Tim. 1:17 _____

Rev. 1:8 _____

God didn’t produce the heavens and the earth by molding pre-existing matter together. He *created* them, bringing them into existence where there had been *nothing* before. At first the earth was formless—without boundaries between land and water, between land and sky, even between the heavens and earth—for God had not yet made these distinctions.

And the earth was empty—totally void of life of any kind. There was no light, only the blackest darkness.

What images do the following passages evoke concerning the creation?

1 Sam. 2:8 _____

Job 26:7 _____

Job 26:10 _____

Ps. 102:25 _____

Ps. 104:1–2 _____

Prov. 3:19 _____

Prov. 8:27–29 _____

Is. 66:1–2 _____

Jer. 32:17 _____

Rev. 4:11 _____

In His creative work, God spoke and it was so. He said, “Let there be light,” and light immediately pierced the darkness (Gen. 1:3). He said, “Let dry ground appear,” and instantly it happened (Gen. 1:9).

What else does the first chapter of Genesis reveal that was created by God’s Word?

What does Heb. 11:3 add to this list?

Created in six days

The inspired account of creation uses the phrase “there was evening and there was morning” six times. Each time, a specific day is noted with the phrase. In this way, God gives us a record of the order in which He created things and the time He took to do it.

Reread Gen. 1:3–5. How did He distinguish between the light and the darkness?

The terms “evening” and “morning” are used together in Ex. 27:21, Lev. 24:3, 1 Sam. 17:16, Esther 2:14, Ps. 90:5–6 and Dan. 8:13–14. What length of time do they establish?

God’s majesty, power and caring provision are apparent throughout creation. He wants us to be a public witness that He is Creator and Lord of all.



Rev. David E. Wiesner is visitation pastor at St. John Lutheran Church, Arnold, Mo.

A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE

October brings to mind the fall season, the harvest of crops and the festival of the Reformation. While any of these could occupy our attention in this article, I've chosen to share some thoughts on a subject near and dear to the heart of Dr. Martin Luther, whose nailing of the 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, Oct. 31, 1517, precipitated the Reformation.

The subject I have in mind is the God-given institution of marriage. Since the beginning of time, the words written in Genesis 2 have defined marriage in a way that transcends time, culture, race, nationality and religion. Here are those words: *"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh"* (Gen. 2:24).

The overwhelming majority of people in our country and even in our world have assumed marriage as the normal, accepted way of living. Some have taken marriage for granted. It has been and still is the mainstay of society. From the marital union of husband and wife comes the blessing of children. My wife, Terry, and I, like many of you, have been blessed with a wonderful Christian marriage, a genuine gift of God!

A major debate is currently raging in our country on the subject of "same-sex marriage." Judges in some parts of the United States are recognizing the "marriage" of two men or two women, despite the time-honored understanding of marriage as a God-given institution whereby one man and one woman are joined together "until death parts us."

This new, strange understanding of marriage brings with it great concern for the future.

In the beginning, God instituted marriage to be the lifelong union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4–6). It is clear that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in both the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9–20; 1 Tim. 1:9–10). It is thus entirely proper that we encourage our pastors, educators and congregation members to work in support and for the preservation of the divinely designed institution of marriage.

As Christians, we have the responsibility to honor and uphold the institution of marriage in every way possible and to refute any attempts to undermine or discredit it (Heb. 13:4). As citizens, we have the responsibility to express our opinions and perspectives on marriage properly and respectfully to those who have been elected to govern and rule our land.

One way to do this is to contact your congressmen and senators to express your opinion regarding the Federal Marriage Amendment. This is an effort to amend the United States Constitution by adding these words: "Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution nor the Constitution of any state, nor state or federal law, shall be construed to require that marital status or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon unmarried couples or groups." You have both the right and responsibility to express yourself in a proper fashion on the subject of the institution of marriage.

Another practical way to express your perspective as Christian citizens is by voting to elect the leaders who will govern our nation, states and cities. It is



certainly true in America that all people may serve in government, regardless of race, color or creed. Yet, if the leaders for whom a Christian votes are leaders whose policies and positions are supportive of Christian values and principles, the Christian is also properly exercising his privilege and responsibility.

Understanding that the governing authority is God's servant and a way through which one may serve God, Martin Luther was prompted to write, "It would even be fine and fitting if all princes were good, true Christians" (from "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," 1523). I urge you to exercise your privileges and responsibilities, both as Christians and as citizens of our wonderful country, by voting in the elections next month.

God's grace, mercy and peace be with you all!

Jerry Kieschnick
**Lives Transformed through Christ,
in Time ... for Eternity!**

John 3:16–17

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